

# DARK LORD POTTER

by pureb99

## CHAPTER 1

### Tortured Youth

#### Dursley Residence, #4 Privet Drive

Harry Potter sat by himself in the dark at number four Privet Drive. He felt something crawling along his arm, but he ignored it. In his cupboard under the stairs, Harry was used to spiders and things crawling all over him. He discovered at an early age that if he didn't try to hurt them, they wouldn't try to hurt him.

For as long as Harry could remember, he had lived with his relatives. He refused to call his aunt, uncle, and cousin his family. Harry had seen how the other children's parents at primary school would smile and hug them when they were picked up. Harry's relatives would never hug him, unless someone important was watching, and they certainly would never smile at him.

At first, the Dursleys' treatment of him caused him to break down and cry. When Harry was younger, he used to wonder why he was unloved. Why his parents left him with his relatives. Why his cousin received countless gifts on his birthday or on Christmas while he got nothing.

When he was five, Harry was finally given an answer to many of his questions. His aunt and uncle had drunk too much brandy at a Christmas party and slurred out how he was a freak and how freaks didn't deserve presents. As if that wasn't enough, his uncle decided to rough him up a bit for the first time. When Vernon had finished hitting his frail body and thrown him into the cupboard, Vernon decided to tell the story about how a drunk James Potter had gotten himself and his wife killed in a car crash. It was the worst Christmas of Harry's life.

Over the next several years, Harry slowly adjusted to the fact that the Dursleys hated him. Harry wished he could somehow get back at his relatives for their treatment of him, but it just wasn't possible. Whenever Harry would get caught glaring hatefully at any one of his relatives, Vernon would always find out and decide that Harry needed to be 'taught a lesson'. Retribution against his cousin Dudley was always impossible. Dudley was much bigger and never without the rest of his friends, who quickly became fond of Dudley's favourite game, Harry Hunting. So Harry did the only thing he could, he buried his hatred, anger, and resentment behind a mask of polite behaviour. Harry was often the most polite and well-mannered person at school, always saying 'please' and 'thank you' and never forgetting to say 'yes sir' or 'no ma'am'.

There was one thing that Harry couldn't control though, the fact that strange things always seemed to happen around him. When he was five, his aunt had decreed that he needed a haircut. She had proceeded to shave his entire head, except for a small patch to cover the lightning bolt shaped scar he had received in the car crash that killed his parents. Harry knew that the next day at school he would be made fun of more than he already was, but miraculously, his hair grew back over night. Another instance was when Dudley and his friends were chasing him behind the school. Harry was one of the fastest kids in school, but unfortunately, not all of Dudley's friends were as fat as Dudley. Harry ran the wrong way and found himself face to face with a brick wall. When he heard the footsteps of Dudley's friends, he closed his eyes and wished he could get away. When Harry opened his eyes, he found himself on the roof of his school building.

As he got older, more strange things happened and Harry was always blamed. When his teacher's hair turned blue, Harry was blamed. When Vernon's brand new car popped all four tires immediately after Harry yelled at Dudley to stop punching him, Harry was blamed. When Dudley told his parents how one of the legs to his chair had disappeared while he was sitting in it during class, Harry was blamed.

Harry always hated it when these strange things happened, he told his relatives that he couldn't be responsible, but his uncle would

always just turn red and scream that he would 'beat it out of him'. Harry wasn't sure what his uncle tried to beat out, but it never worked anyway.

Harry was currently recovering in the cupboard under the stairs. He had been locked in his cupboard for the last three days and he was tired, thirsty, and hungry. Harry was being punished because he had spoken to a boa constrictor at the zoo and soon afterwards the glass disappeared, releasing the snake right when his cousin and his friend were looking at it.

As Harry wondered how long his relatives would keep him locked up, the door to his cupboard opened and the bright light came streaming in. "Oww!" Harry exclaimed, shielding his eyes from the sudden exposure to bright light.

SLAP

"Boy, are you complaining about the light now! Maybe you need another three days in your cupboard, huh?" Vernon yelled.

"No sir. I was just surprised," Harry said neutrally. He had to get out of the cupboard; he wasn't going to last much longer on half a peanut butter sandwich and one glass of water a day.

"Boy, Dudley said his friends have started asking questions about you, so you are to go to the park. Make sure everyone sees that you are alive," Vernon Dursley said.

"Yes sir," Harry said as he slowly climbed out of the cupboard and made his way out of the house.

Just great, one hell for another, Harry thought angrily as he carefully made his way toward the park where Dudley's gang usually met. He spotted them as soon as he got to the park. After all, it wasn't hard to miss ten kids beating up three smaller ones.

Harry saw Dudley's friend Malcolm stop punching the little boy. When an evil smirk appeared on Malcolm's face, Harry knew he had been

spotted. Harry immediately started to back away from the group when he heard Malcolm's squeaky voice say, "Oie Dudley, look who it is!"

Dudley stopped punching a boy and turned his fat neck. A chubby smile crossed his face and he happily screamed, "Everyone, Harry's come out to play!"

Harry smirked at his cousin's stupidity. Dudley and his friends were still at least twenty meters away. When Dudley shouted his name for the entire park to hear, everyone knew Harry was alive - just like his uncle had demanded. Harry quickly started to run the opposite direction of his cousin. After cutting through back alleys, yards, and doubling back a few times, Harry managed to lose his pursuers. Harry grinned at his accomplishment, but it was quickly ripped off his face when a very unwelcome voice came from behind him.

"Oh my God, Mike, it's our lucky day!" Piers Polks said loudly.

Harry slowly turned around and saw Dudley's best friend Piers and his little brother Mike coming out of a house.

"Yeah, I guess you're right, let's show him he isn't allowed on this side of the park," Mike said happily.

Harry immediately started running as fast as he could, but Piers, unlike Dudley, didn't shun physical activity and Harry was already tired from having to outrun Dudley's other friends. After about thirty seconds, Piers had managed to catch up and Harry was tackled to the ground.

"Ha, getting slow, Harry," Piers said as he pinned Harry's arms to the ground.

"You're guilty of trespassing, and entering a no freak zone. How do you plead?" Piers demanded.

Harry gritted his teeth. Piers always was one for melodramatics. No matter what answer Harry gave, Piers would punish him. "Guilty," Harry said boldly, not looking away from Piers.

"So you knowingly did this? That's a bad Harry," Mike said as he kicked him in the side, causing Harry to grunt in pain.

"Hey Mike, go get Dudley while I interrogate the prisoner," Piers said, smiling.

"You got it," Mike said happily.

Harry was actually a little frightened now. He had never been alone with Piers and Harry had heard tales of other kids who Piers had been left alone with. Usually, they all included Piers carving his name into their flesh with a sharp rock or punching a single spot until it bled. Much to Harry's shock though, Piers simply got up and smiled.

"Sorry about all that, Harry, you need a hand up?" Piers said, offering his hand.

Harry eyed Piers' hand very sceptically, but he wasn't about to get up and turn his back on the boy. Reluctantly, he gave Piers his hand to help pull him up. Piers started to pull Harry up, but when Harry was halfway standing, Piers brought his other fist around and drove it into Harry's face.

"Ah!" Harry screamed as he fell back on the ground smacking his head against the park's bicycle pavement.

"Ha! Hurts, doesn't it, freak!" Piers said, grinning.

Harry felt the blood running down his face from his nose, and he was incredibly dizzy. Doing the only thing he could, he started to back away from Piers.

"Now, now, Harry, you can trust me," Piers said as he ran over to Harry and kicked him in the side.

"Ahhhh!" Harry screamed as Piers kicked him directly in the rib that his uncle had bruised days earlier. Lucky for Harry though, a few cyclists rounded the corner, stopped, and turned to look around at the sound of Harry screaming.

Piers saw the people looking in their direction and quickly leaned in and said, "You got lucky, you little shit, next time I'll make sure you can't scream," before sprinting back towards his house.

Harry got to his feet as fast as he could. Piers would probably come back as soon as the cyclists were gone and he had to get away. As he started walking, Harry noticed how much it hurt to breathe, but he needed to get far away from Piers. Harry walked towards some rather large bushes and trees. If he could hide himself for a little while, he might be able to get better. Whenever his uncle hurt him, he always felt better after sleeping.

Harry slowly made his way deeper into the trees. When he found a nice little nook completely hidden by some bushes, he fell to his knees and passed out.

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"Hey, why are you sleeping there?"

Harry slowly opened his eyes. He immediately regretted his decision as he was incredibly tired, dizzy, and he found it difficult to breathe. Gritting his teeth, Harry managed to raise his head and see who had spoken to him.

Harry found his glasses near his side and put them on. Standing a few feet away from him, he saw a girl maybe a year or two older than him, looking at him in horror. I must look bad, he thought cynically. The girl was wearing hip-hugging jeans and flip-flops with a shirt that said 'The Weird Sisters '89 tour.'

"Go away, pl-please," Harry said as he gagged and then spit up some blood.

"Oh Merlin, you're hurt!" the girl exclaimed. She ran forward and knelt at his side.

"No, leave me alone, I'll get better...j-just leave me alone," Harry said weakly as he fought back the desire to pass out.

"Please let me help you. I promise I won't hurt you," the girl said as she touched his side.

Harry had to stifle a cry at the touch. "Please just leave me here, I'll be better soon, I promise!"

"Oh Merlin!" the girl said, looking at his forehead. "Y-Y-You're Harry Potter!"

Harry looked up to get a better look at the girl. When he realized he had never seen her before, he said, "How do you know who I am?"

"Your scar! That's how I know who you are. You really are Harry Potter!" the girl said, practically bouncing up and down with excitement.

"Yeah, so what. Glad you know who I am. Planning on getting Piers and Dudley now so they can wail on me some more?" Harry spat.

"Huh? Harry, I wouldn't do that!" the girl said in horror.

"Nymphadora! Nymphadora, where are you!" a sharp voice called from behind them.

"Mum, I'm over here, come here quickly!" the girl called out.

"Nymph, what are you doing out here? Oh my, are you okay?!" the older woman exclaimed.

"Yes, I just fell asleep back here, ma'am. I'll be on my way now," Harry said as he slowly tried to get up, but the pain in his side was so sharp that he fell back down.

"Mum, that's Harry Potter, we have to help him!" the girl named Nymphadora said.

"You're Harry Potter!" the woman said in shock as she looked at the beaten child.

"Yes, now please leave me alone. I can get better, I just need some more time," Harry said weakly.

"Dear, you are coming with us right now, you need help," the woman said sharply.

"Why do you want to help me?" Harry asked, looking at the woman with distrust.

"Because you're hurt, stupid," Nymphadora said like it was the most obvious thing in the world.

"Nymphadora, language," the woman chided.

"Why would you want to help me? I don't even know you," Harry said.

"Because it's the right thing to do, now please come with us," the older woman pleaded.

Knowing that he probably needed the help, Harry reluctantly nodded his head in acceptance.

"Okay dear, let's get you up," the older woman said, extending a hand to help him up.

Remembering Piers' trick from earlier, Harry ignored the woman's help and said, "I'll get up on my own."

"No, Harry, I'll help you up," Nymphadora said.

"I can do it myself," Harry said as he fought his way up. When he finally made it into a standing position, he suddenly felt light headed. He touched his hand to his side and noticed his clothes were wet. When he raised his hand to his face, he saw that it was covered in blood.

"Oh my god, mum, he's bleeding all over!" Nymphadora said.

Harry didn't hear Nymphadora though. He felt his legs give out under him as he lost consciousness.

Tonks Residence

Harry opened his eyes. He was in a strange room that he had never seen before. He looked down at himself and noticed that most of his upper body and head was bandaged.

"Ugh. Where am I?" he groaned.

"You're up! I'm so happy you're okay!" a voice from the door said happily.

Harry looked up to see the blond haired girl from the park, only now the girl's hair was much shorter. "Nymphadora, is that you?" Harry asked.

Harry saw a flash of anger pass behind the girl's eyes as she started to walk towards him.

Harry quickly assessed the situation and when the girl was close enough, he pushed her back with every bit of strength that he had. Much to his surprise, the girl was blasted backwards and hit the wall. Amazed at what happened, Harry could only watch as Nymphadora groaned and rubbed the back of her head.

"H-Harry, why did you do that?" Nymphadora asked as she slowly got up.

Harry cautiously got out of bed, his hands ready to hit the girl if she tried anything. "You were mad at me," Harry accused viciously.

"Harry, I'm not mad at you, I promise," Nymphadora said as she approached, albeit a bit more hesitantly.

"You're lying, Nymphadora, I saw it in your eyes," Harry barked.

"Harry, you don't understand, I don't like it when people call me Nymphadora. Please just call me Tonks. That's why I was upset, I don't like my first name," Nymphadora said.

Harry looked deep into Tonks' eyes as if trying to ascertain the truth. He saw only honesty in the Girl's eyes, but he refused to be tricked. "How do I know you aren't lying?" Harry asked.

"I swear to Merlin, I'm not lying to you," Nymphadora said, exasperated.

"Why would I care if you swore to Merlin?" Harry laughed bitterly.

"What do you mean, Harry? He's the greatest wizard ever," Nymphadora said matter-of-factly.

"Exactly, he's made up," Harry said like it was the most obvious thing in the world.

"Made up? Are you insane?! If I didn't know any better, Harry, I'd think you were a muggle," Nymphadora said in shock.

"What the hell is a muggle? You're not making any sense, Nymphador...err Tonks," Harry said.

"Nymphadora, stop bothering Harry!" a voice yelled from the door.

Harry turned to Tonks' mother climbing up the stairs.

"Mum, he-he doesn't know about Merlin! He doesn't know what he is!" Nymphadora blurted out.

"I know, sweetie, I just got done talking to professor Dumbledore. Harry doesn't know about our world," Mrs. Tonks said.

"Then we need to tell him," Nymphadora said.

"What wor-" Harry started to ask

"I'm afraid not, dear; the professor wants us to take him home now," the woman said, cutting off Harry's question.

"No mum, please, look at him, he's still hurt," Nymphadora said.

"I'm fin-" Harry said.

"He's a lot better now, and I'm sure his relatives will be worried about him," Mrs. Tonks said.

Harry felt his face go white. "How long have I been here?" he asked quickly.

"Harry, you were really hurt, you had some internal bleeding, a bruised rib, and a slight concussion. You should really stay..." Tonks said.

"No Nymphadora, professor Dumbledore says he must return to his relatives immediately," Mrs. Tonks said.

Any colour left in Harry's face instantly drained. "I had all those injuries. I must have been here...how long have I been here?" Harry demanded once more. I'm going to be in so much trouble when I get back. I'll probably be locked in my cupboard for the rest of the summer.

"Two days," Mrs. Tonks said. "That is why we must get you back home."

Two days? How can I have healed from all those injuries in two days?! It's not possible. It can't be done, Harry thought frantically.

"Harry, when's your birthday?" Nymphadora asked.

"The 31st," Harry said, still in shock.

"Oh mum, can he come over for his birthday, please?" Nymphadora pleaded.

"Nymphadora, I'm sure his relatives will want to celebrate with hi-" Mrs. Tonks said.

Harry turned a cold stare on Mrs. Tonks. "This is a sick joke, isn't it!" he demanded.

Tonks and Mrs. Tonks turned to look at Harry curiously. "What do you mean?" Tonks asked.

"No one can heal from those injuries in two days! It's not possible! Now you're being all nice to me! Did the Dursleys pay you to do this? Be nice to Harry and then everyone pops out and mocks him! Well, I won't be anyone's joke!" Harry said hysterically.

"Dear, you must calm down. This is no joke. You really did have those injuries, you need to relax," Mrs. Tonks said.

"Just stop it, I need to go! I want to go!" Harry said as he started to pace back and forth. I need to leave, I need to go now. I have to go!

As Harry continued to pace, he felt his stomach lurch, and his body scream out in pain. He closed his eyes and he felt like his entire body was being squeezed through a tube. When he opened his eyes, he was standing directly in front of the Dursleys' house.

"What happened? How did I get here?" Harry asked wildly as he began to look around.

There was a loud crack, and Harry turned around to see Tonks and her mother standing behind him. "Harry you can apparate!" Nymphadora said in shock.

"Where did you just come from? How did I get here?" Harry demanded wildly.

"How long have you been able to apparate?" Mrs. Tonks asked quickly.

"What are you talking about? What's apparate? How did you just appear here? How did I just appear here?" Harry said frantically.

"Apparating is when you disappear and re-appear somewhere else. That's really advanced magic, Harry, they don't teach that till sixth year..."

"Nymphadora, stop! He's not supposed to know. Now, Harry, is this your house?" Nymphadora's mum asked.

"Yes, but I don't understand - how did I do that earlier? How did you just appear out of nowhere?" Harry asked again.

"Harry, you're a wizard!" Nymphadora blurted out.

"I'm a what?!" Harry gasped as his uncle opened the door.

"BOY! TWO DAYS, TWO DAYS YOU'VE BEEN GONE!" Vernon roared.

Harry started backing up. "I'm sorry uncle, I really am. I was-" Harry started to say before his uncle grabbed him by his collar and pulled him forward.

"You little prick!" Vernon roared and threw him into the house forcefully, causing Harry to stumble and hit the floor. His large frame was, of course, blocking their audience's view of Harry's fall.

"Sir, I must protest, your nephew here was hurt a few days ago. My daughter and I found him, but he quickly fell unconscious, he just recently woke up. Now, we did our best to help him..."

"And what do you want? Wait, you probably want some money for helping the little bastard. Well, you aren't getting any. The kid probably got into a fight!" Vernon roared, slamming the door closed.

Outside #4 Privet Drive

The scene outside the house was one of complete shock. "Mum, I'm worried. Did you see the way that man looked at Harry?" Nymphadora said, her face pale.

"I'm sure that it's not that..." but her voice was cut off by a blood-curdling scream from inside the house. Followed by a very sharp, "Shut up, boy!"

"Mum, they are hurting him. We have to help!" Nymphadora demanded.

"I'm sure it's not what it sounds like, dear. Professor Dumbledore said tha..."

Another muffled scream was heard and Tonks started to panic.

"Mum, they are hurting him! That's Harry Potter! That's Harry bloody Potter those muggles are hurting! Mum, we have to help him!" Tonks said as she took out her wand and pointed it at the door.

Realizing that her daughter was about to perform under-age magic, Andromeda reached out and grabbed her daughter's wand.

"Nymphadora! You can't jus..."

"No, mum, they are hurting him. We have to do something!" Tonks said, exasperated.

Andromeda saw how determined her daughter looked and she felt herself releasing her. "Very well, put your wand away. I'll open the door, but if it turns out to be nothing, then you will be in big trouble. Alohomora," Mrs. Tonks said, causing the front door to unlock.

Inside #4 Privet Drive

"Boy, two days! Two full days! Your aunt had to cook and clean! You are going to your cupboard for the next two weeks, but before you do, I'm going to teach you a lesson you'll never forget!" Vernon Dursley roared, taking off his belt.

"No uncle, I'm sorry! I-I wanted to come back, but I..." Harry's pleas were silenced when his uncle struck him with the metal belt buckle.

Harry let out a howl of pain as his uncle relentlessly struck Harry's bandaged back and side.

"Shut up, boy!" Vernon roared as he brought the belt down harder.

Harry let out a muffled cry of pain, but he bit his lower lip to stop himself from screaming too loudly. His back had now gone numb, and he felt the coppery taste of blood in his mouth from biting his lip. In between the next few strikes, Harry heard the door open.

“Stop what you are doing now!”

“Get out of my house!” Vernon roared, dropping Harry, who fell to the floor in agony.

“Oh Merlin, Harry!” Nymphadora screamed as she raced over to where Harry was lying on the ground, his side bleeding through the bandages.

Harry opened his eyes and saw that Tonks had silent tears falling from her face. He wanted to say something to her, but when he opened his mouth to speak, the massive amount of blood that had collected from biting his own lip started to leak out.

“You bastard! You hurt him!” Tonks screamed, leaping to her feet.

“The little freak deserved it!” Vernon roared.

“How could you treat Harry Potter like that?!” Andromeda cried.

“You’re one of them! I want you and your filthy abnormal daughter out of my house,” Vernon said with disgust.

“Stupefy!” Mrs. Tonks shouted.

Harry lifted his head in time to see a jet of red light strike his uncle, causing him to fly back several feet before falling to the ground where he lay motionless. If Mrs. Tonks or her daughter would have looked at Harry at that moment, they would have seen a maniacal grin spread across his face. “Nymphadora,” Harry called out causing Tonks and her mum to look down at him, “I want to be able to do that,” he said before passing out.

This is the revised chapter 1. Much thanks to EvilDime for editing it for me.

## Chapter 2

### A Fresh Start

Harry woke up in the same bed that he did the day before. His mind at once tried to piece together what happened. He recalled being beaten by his uncle before Nymphadora and her mum somehow broke into the house. Slowly, the events began to replay in his head. When he remembered Nymphadora's mother killing his uncle with the red light, he smiled. It's real, Tonks wasn't lying. Her mum's a witch and she said I'm a wizard.

Harry sat up quickly. He needed answers. If that woman could kill his uncle so easily, then he had to learn how to do magic.

"Harry, you're up!"

Harry jerked his head to the door where a very happy Nymphadora stood smiling at him.

"Nymphadora, you were telling the truth! Your mum's a witch! Are you a witch? You said I was a wizard, how do you know? Can you teach me how to do that?" Harry asked quickly.

"Wait a second, Harry. I really shouldn't be the one telling you all this. Mum is at work right now, and it's really much better if she explains everything to you," Nymphadora said.

"No! How do you know I'm a wizard? Can I do magic like your mum did? Can you? Please, Nymphadora, can you tell me something?" Harry pleaded.

"Harry, slow down. I- I guess I can explain some stuff, but I don't know everything," Tonks said as she sat on the bed.

Harry sat down and waited for her to start talking.

"Harry - yes, you are a wizard, and a powerful one at that," Nymphadora said.

“How do you know? If I’m some powerful wizard, then shouldn’t I have been able to turn my fat waste-of-space cousin into a rat or something?” Harry asked curiously.

Tonks snorted unladylike at the question. “Harry, turning a person into a rat is really, really, really, really advanced magic, some witches and wizards never even learn that kind of advanced transfiguration, but then again, you can Apparate already, so who knows.”

“Apparating? That’s when you disappear and reappear somewhere else, right?” Harry asked, determined to remember everything he was being told.

“Yep, I can’t believe you can do it! Mum was hysterical when you just disappeared,” Nymphadora said, a smile flickering across her face at the memory.

“How did your mum find me?” Harry asked.

“I’m not one hundred percent sure how she followed you, because I don’t know a lot about Apparating, but mum is a spell crafter and she works with Wild Magic a lot, I think she somehow realized what you had done and followed you,” Nymphadora said.

“Oh,” Harry said, slightly disappointed at the lack of information. “You said Apparating is advanced magic?”

“Merlin, yes! Even if you didn’t consciously do it, someone your age shouldn’t be able to Apparate! They don’t even bother to teach it at Hogwarts till you are in your sixth year,” Nymphadora said excitedly.

“What’s Hogwarts?” Harry asked.

“It’s a school where they teach magic. There are four houses: Ravenclaw, Hufflepuff, Gryffindor, and Slytherin. I got sorted into Gryffindor last year,” Nymphadora said.

“So, will I be able to go there?” Harry asked hopefully.

"Harry, you will definitely be able to go. How old are you?" Nymphadora asked.

"I turn eleven on the 31st," Harry said quickly.

"Well, then you'll be going this year, Harry," Nymphadora said, grinning.

"Really? That's awesome, I can't wait! I want to know how to do that red spell you mum did. I mean, your mum killed my uncle like it was nothing. I wish I could have been learning this magic stuff ages ago," Harry said happily.

"Harry Potter! My mother is not a murder - she did not kill your uncle!" Nymphadora barked.

Harry's eyes widened at the new information. "What do you mean, he's not dead? I saw him, he wasn't breathing, he had to have been dead!"

"My mum stunned your uncle, Harry, she didn't kill him. Merlin, do you think she's some Death Eater or something?!" Nymphadora explained, clearly insulted.

"S-so Vernon is alive?" Harry asked, dreading the answer.

"If that fat oaf's name was Vernon, then yeah," Nymphadora replied a little frostily.

Harry swore under his breath. The odds of getting away from his relatives were beginning to look less and less good. "Nymphadora, I-I don't think I'll be able to become a wizard," Harry admitted, a little crestfallen.

This seemed to shock Nymphadora out of her brooding, because she openly gaped at him. "What do you mean, you don't think you'll be able to become a wizard?"

"My uncle," Harry said, spitting the word, "and aunt will never let me go learn magic. I hoped that with Vernon dead, my aunt would be too

scared to tell me no, but if he's alive, he'll probably just be that much angrier at me."

"Harry," Nymphadora said comfortingly, "there is no way you won't be allowed to learn magic. I mean, you're famous in the wizarding world."

"What?" Harry asked in surprise.

"Err yeah, I wasn't supposed to tell you that, but you're famous, Harry. Merlin, if people ever found out that those Muggles have been hurting you, someone would probably kill them," Nymphadora said, suddenly very serious.

"How am I famous?" Harry asked gob smacked.

"Ugh...well...um, I guess I can tell you. I mean, I did sort of let the cat out of the bag, didn't I?" Nymphadora said.

"Yes, you did. Please tell me why I'm famous," Harry said.

"I'll do it on one condition," Nymphadora said.

"What?" Harry asked warily.

"Will you call me Tonks and not Nymphadora? I hate my first name," she said honestly.

"Done. Now, Tonks, why am I famous?" Harry asked, stressing her last name.

Tonks smiled at the use of her surname and said, "Well, a few years ago, this evil wizard called He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named..."

"That's a stupid name. He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, really scary," Harry said sarcastically.

"Harry, that wasn't his real name, people don't speak his name," Tonks chided.

“Why? What’s his real name?” Harry asked, truly interested now.

“Um, I don’t think I should say it. I mean, I’ve said it once just to see what would happen, and my mum grounded me for a month,” Tonks said.

“Please, Tonks, just tell me, your mum isn’t here - and why don’t they speak his name?” Harry asked.

“Merlin, Harry! People are still scared of him! He was a monster. His n-name w-was L-L-Lord V-V-Voldemort. Now, please don’t make me say it again, okay?” Tonks said.

“Alright, I won’t. You said he was a monster? A real monster like a Vampire or werewolf?” Harry asked.

“No Harry, he was a wizard, and mum says not to call werewolves monsters. Lycanthropy is a disease and it ruins the lives of the people infected by it. Now, He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named was a really powerful wizard. He started collecting followers and they started to kill Muggles because they thought wizards were superior,” Tonks said.

I’d have to agree, Harry thought darkly.

“A war broke out between him and the Ministry. The people who stood up to You-Know-Who were usually killed very quickly. He was ruthless, Harry, and he was one of the most powerful wizards ever. He tried to kill you and your parents one night...” Tonks said.

“What! H-he tried to kill my parents and me?” Harry asked in shock. Does that mean my parents fought against this You-Know-Who? Why would anyone fight to stop a man from killing Muggles? The Dursleys, Piers, Dudley’s gang, and all those people from primary school deserve to die.

“My mum said your parents fought with Headmaster Dumbledore against You-Know-Who. I guess he found out where you were living, because he showed up on Halloween at your house and killed both your parents, Harry, but when he tried to kill you, he couldn’t and he died,” Tonks said.

"What? That doesn't make any sense! How did he die? How come he couldn't kill me?" Harry asked in shock.

"I don't know. No one really does, but everyone knows who you are because somehow you stopped him. You-Know-Who sent the killing curse at you, but it didn't kill you. It only gave you that lightning-bolt scar on your head. That's how I knew who you were. Everyone in the wizarding world knows Harry Potter has a lightning-bolt shaped scar on his head," Tonks said, pointing at his head.

"That's unbelievable. I-I was told my parents were killed in a car crash. I knew the Dursleys were lying to me," Harry said, malevolence dripping from his voice.

"Oh Nyphadora, you didn't!" said a voice from the door.

Harry and Tonks looked up to see Mrs. Tonks looking at them exasperatedly.

"I'm sorry, mum, he asked and I wasn't going to keep it from him," Tonks said.

"Oh dear. Well, Harry, what do you think of everything my daughter has taken it upon herself to tell you?" Mrs. Tonks asked as she walked into the room.

"I'm glad I know. It clears a lot of things up, really. I'm glad that I'm famous and my uncle won't be able to stop me from going to Hogwarts, but I do have some questions," Harry said.

"What are they?" Mrs. Tonks asked kindly.

"Err... well, how will I pay for Hogwarts? My aunt and uncle won't give me the money and I wouldn't take any if they offered," Harry spat.

"Don't worry about money, Harry. Your parents were very well to do, especially your father. They left you quite a bit of money," Mrs. Tonks said sympathetically.

"But wouldn't my aunt and uncle have control over that?" Harry asked.

"My, you are bright! I bet you'd make a fine Ravenclaw, Harry. To answer your question, wizarding fortunes can't be turned over to non-magical people to control. When I spoke to Professor Dumbledore, he said someone else controlled the finances for you, but I didn't inquire who," Mrs. Tonks said.

Harry simply nodded his head and told himself to find out who was in control of his money when he could. "So I'll be able to go to Hogwarts this year?" Harry asked.

"Yes, Harry. When I floo called Headmaster Dumbledore, he gave me your letter," Mrs. Tonks said as she handed him a letter.

Harry quickly opened the letter and read it several times. It was like a dream come true. He was a wizard and he would be going to a school to learn magic.

"This is going to be so great, Harry! You're going to Hogwarts this year, too! I'm sure we'll be the best of friends!" Tonks said excitedly.

"You won't mind hanging out with someone who's a year younger than you?" Harry asked, surprised and a little wary of Tonks' enthusiasm.

Tonks' smile immediately fell and she lowered her head. "Honestly, I don't have many friends, Harry. Everyone in Gryffindor teases me because I'm a metamorphmagus and the girls spread rumors about me so that I can't make friends in other houses," Tonks said sadly.

Harry felt bad for Tonks, but his curiosity forced him to ask, "I don't understand, what's a metamorphmagus?"

"I...I can change my appearance at will." Tonks said hesitantly before shortening her hair and turning it from blond to red.

"Oh wow, that's awesome! I did something like that once. My aunt gave me this horrendous hair cut and when I woke up the next

morning, my hair was back to normal,” Harry said, missing the shocked expression on Tonks’ face.

“H-Harry, are you serious?” Tonks asked.

“Yeah,” Harry said.

“That’s amazing,” Tonks blurted out, “You could be like me! Mum, do you think he could be a metamorphmagus?” Tonks asked.

“Um, well, I don’t think so, Nymphadora. It’s a rare talent,” Mrs. Tonks said.

”Try to change your hair, Harry! Focus on your hair turning blond,” Tonks said, undeterred.

“Err, okay,” Harry said as he imagined what he would look like with blond hair. He closed his eyes and thought very hard about his hair changing color. He heard a gasp and opened his eyes. “Did it work?” he asked.

Tonks jumped up and down and gave him a very big hug. “Look and see!”

Harry walked over to a mirror and gasped. His normally pitch black hair was now completely blond. “Wow, this is great!” Harry said as he touched his now blond hair.

“Harry, normally I would say you should register your ability at the ministry, but I don’t think it would be good if people found out about this,” Mrs. Tonks said.

“Why?” Harry asked.

“Well, Harry, you are incredibly famous. You probably couldn’t even buy your school supplies without being mobbed by people. Besides, if I could go back in time, I wouldn’t have had Nymphadora register at the Ministry,” Mrs. Tonks said.

Harry nodded his head. "That makes sense. I don't want to be bothered by everyone when I'm just learning about being a wizard. Why wouldn't you have Tonks register at the Ministry though?"

"Because any time you register at the Ministry it goes on public record. One of the older girls found out that I was a metamorph and demanded to see me change one day. I was stupid and I did it. After that, everyone started to demand that I change into things for them, and when I told them no, they started spreading rumors and pranking me! I mean, I'm not some stupid play thing for the Weasley twins!" Tonks said angrily as a tear rolled down her face.

"Who are the Weasley twins?" Harry asked sympathetically.

"They are these two kids in Gryffindor, who are a year older than me. Everyone thinks that they are so funny, but all they do is prank and make fun of me. Every time they see me, they ask me to turn into all these stupid things," Tonks said sadly.

"We'll get them back, Tonks, I promise!" Harry said darkly.

"My hero," Tonks said sarcastically, but hugged him regardless.

Harry smiled for the first time in a long time as Tonks hugged him. "No problem, Tonks," Harry said.

"Well, you two, tomorrow we'll go to Diagon Alley to get your supplies. Harry, I was going to place a glamour on you so you didn't get mobbed by the crowd, but since you are a metamorphmagus, Nymphadora will work with you to change your hair color and hide your scar," Mrs. Tonks said.

"Alright. Thank you, Mrs. Tonks," Harry said brightly.

Harry and Tonks spent the next several hours talking about Hogwarts, working on Harry's metamorphmagus skills, and talking about the different school houses. Tonks eventually brought up Quidditch and Harry was fascinated by the sport. Tonks told him how her favorite team was the Kent Shooting Stars, and how she was at the game last year when they won the cup.

"That's awesome, Tonks. The Stars will be my favorite Quidditch team, too," Harry proudly announced, causing Tonks to smile and give him another hug.

"This year is going to be so great Harry!" Tonks said, smiling.

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Harry, Tonks, and Mrs. Tonks all got up early to go to Diagon Alley. Harry changed his hair color and hid his scar before they left. Tonks spent a good chunk of the previous night explaining floo travel, but nothing could have prepared Harry for the strange dizzy feeling that went along with it.

When everyone arrived at the Leaky Cauldron, the three of them entered Diagon Alley. Harry was a little nervous that someone would notice him, but Tonks assured him that with blond hair and no scar he was just another wizard here to buy school supplies.

The three of them made their way up to a massive white building with three very strange looking creatures standing guard. When they approached, the creatures bowed and opened the doors for them.

"Goblins," Tonks whispered to Harry quietly.

"Cool." Harry said. Those two big ones at the door look like they would be able to really mess up Dudley and Vernon, Harry thought as they approached the nearest counter.

"We need to take some money out of our vault for school supplies," Mrs. Tonks said.

"Do you have your key?" The goblin asked, sounding incredibly bored.

"Yes, it's right here," Mrs. Tonks said, handing the key over.

"That looks to be in order. Rignork, take them to vault No. 322."

"Yes sir. Right this way, ma'am," the Goblin said.

"Wait, what about my money?" Harry asked before they started walking away.

"Harry, dear, this is on us," Mrs. Tonks said with her ever-present smile.

"No offense, ma'am, but I've never had any money in my entire life. I would like to see my vault if I can," Harry said. No way am I not going to see it. What if there is something my parents left me that could explain why they wanted to fight against Voldemort? Harry thought.

"Who are you?" the Goblin at the desk finally asked.

"Harry Potter," Harry answered.

The Goblin seemed to eye him very carefully before putting on some blue glasses. "Ah, I see. Do you have your key?" the Goblin asked.

"Err, no sir, I only realized I was a wizard a few days ago," Harry admitted.

"What about all the notices from the bank regarding your interest payments, did you never wonder about those?" the Goblin asked.

"I never got any notices," Harry answered simply.

"Excuse me?" the Goblin asked coldly.

"I never got any notices, and I'm sure if my aunt and uncle found out I had money, they would have tried to take it from me," Harry said.

"I see. This is highly unusual. Rignork, take the Tonks to their vault. Mr. Potter, please follow me," the teller Goblin said.

"Can't they come with me?" Harry asked.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Potter, but for bank security reasons, only the person who is making a charge against the Goblin nation can appear to the Head of Gringotts," the Goblin said.

"What?! He's going to meet the Head of Gringotts?" Mrs. Tonks asked in shock.

"Mr. Potter is claiming that a level nine fraud has been committed against his account. If this is true, we will get to the bottom of it. Mr. Potter, please follow me," the goblin said.

"Harry, we'll meet you when you are done," Mrs. Tonks said, still in shock.

"Um, okay," Harry agreed, not quite sure what was happening but hurrying after the Goblin regardless.

Harry followed the Goblin for some time before he stopped in front of two massive golden doors. Three Goblins, of intimidating size and wielding swords, approached them.

"Mr. Potter is making a charge against the Goblin Nation. I need to speak with Chief Horik," the teller Goblin said.

The large Goblins looked at each other and then to Harry before allowing them to pass. The doors opened, and Harry saw a group of twelve Gobins sitting around a massive golden table. All of them looked angrily at the intruders.

"What is the meaning of this interruption?" the nearest Goblin demanded.

"Sir, an ancient family has charged the Goblin Nation with a level nine fraud," the teller Goblin said importantly.

The entire table broke into shouts before the Head Goblin seemed to gain control. "Who makes this claim?"

"Mr. Harry J. Potter," the Goblin said, beckoning Harry forward.

Harry approached the Goblins, who seemed to be eyeing him with mistrust.

"Are you sure this is Mr. Potter?" the Head Goblin asked suspiciously.

Harry suddenly realized he looked nothing like himself and changed back to his normal form.

"Ah, so he's a metamorphmagus," the Head Goblin said, showing several sharp teeth.

"What is the claim he has made against us?" another Goblin asked viciously.

"He claims he has never once seen a single bank statement regarding his account," the teller Goblin replied.

"Mr. Potter, is this true?" the Head Goblin asked.

"Um...yes sir, I didn't even know I was a wizard till a few days ago. If I had seen a bank statement, I would have remembered it. I've never had any money in my entire life," Harry said.

"Mr. Potter, do you understand the seriousness of what you have just said?" the head Goblin asked.

"Um, no sir, I don't," Harry said honestly.

"Mr. Potter, Goblins pride themselves of truthful dealings. Many wizards consider us underhanded, and greedy. While that is our nature, we follow every contract we sign to the letter and are always honest. What you have just implied is that a member of our staff has failed one of our oldest and largest accounts," the Goblin said.

"Sir, I'm really sorry, I mean no disrespect. You all seem like wonderful people. I just didn't get anything from the bank," Harry said.

"He lies, sir! He seeks reparations!" a Goblin shouted.

"What if he doesn't, Sakara?" another Goblin said sharply.

"Mr. Potter, have you ever heard of Veritaserum?" the Head Goblin asked.

"No sir," Harry replied.

"It's a truth telling Potion, Mr. Potter. Three drops on your tongue will force you to tell the truth. For such a charge, it is required to be administered. Will you submit to the serum?" the Goblin asked.

"Um, well... okay, I guess. As long as you only ask about my bank information," Harry said nervously as he thought of the Goblins asking him about the Dursleys.

"Agreed," the Head Goblin said as several other Goblins entered the room.

One of the new Goblins led Harry to a chair while another went and got a small vial. Harry opened his mouth and the Goblin placed three drops of a clear liquid on his tongue. A sudden euphoric feeling swept all over him. He smiled at the Goblins who all seemed to be in agreement that the potion had taken affect.

"What is your name?"

"Harry Potter."

Several Goblins seemed annoyed that this was the real Harry Potter.

"Have you ever seen any of your bank statements?"

"No sir."

The Goblins where now openly stunned.

"Do you know anyone who would try to hide your statements?"

"No. My aunt and uncle both hate me, but if they knew I had money, they would have tried to take it from me."

"Have there been any transactions in the Potter trust vault over the last eleven years?" the Head Goblin snapped.

"No sir, none," another Goblin answered.

"Mr. Potter, what is your opinion of the Goblins, now that we have failed you?"

"I don't understand how you failed me. You all seem angry that someone has wronged me, and that means a lot to me. You seem trustworthy and honest. I am not mad at you," Harry said.

The Head Goblin signaled for the antidote and soon Harry felt the euphoric feeling leave him.

"That was strange," Harry admitted.

The Head Goblin smiled. "Mr. Potter, I'm very happy that you do not hold any ill feelings towards us, but the truth is we have failed you. We will find out exactly about how this happened. I will have three percentage points of interest added on all your family's gold for the last ten years to make up for the mistake. I hope that it is enough. I have taken the liberty of providing you with 100 Galleons from my personal vault for your school shopping. You also have my word that we will find out how this happened."

"Thank you, sir. I appreciate all that you are doing," Harry said, smiling.

"If you have any questions, please owl us, Mr. Potter. My name is Horik, Head of Gringotts and High Commander of the Goblin Nation."

"I will, thank you, sir," Harry said, shaking the Goblin's hand, accepting the bag of coins, and leaving the conference room. Right before the doors closed he heard Horik screaming in some strange language at the other Goblins.

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Harry found Mrs. Tonks and Tonks waiting for him in the main lobby of Gringotts talking to the largest man he had ever seen.

"Harry, are you ok? What did they say?" Tonks asked as soon as she saw him

"It's okay, Tonks. They were kind of nice, and to be honest, I like them," Harry said.

"Really? Usually no one likes Goblins, Harry," Mrs. Tonks said, stunned, as she nervously eyed the Goblin standing behind Harry.

"Why? Because they are really good with money? That's no reason not to trust them; if anything, it makes them more trustworthy," Harry said simply. Harry didn't notice several Goblins nearby stop and stare at him in shock.

"Blimey, that's interesting company yeh keep," the large man said.

Harry just looked at the massive man not sure what to make of that statement.

"Oh, Harry, this is Hagrid. Hagrid, this is Harry Potter," Mrs. Tonks said, introducing them.

"Blimey, you sure have grown up! Last time I saw you, you were only a baby," Hagrid said with a smile.

"Did you know my parents?" Harry asked curiously.

"That I did, 'Arry. Fine people they were. Shame what happened, I was the one who found you after he attacked," Hagrid said sadly.

"You were!" Harry said in shock.

"Yep, took you to them relatives of yours," Hagrid said proudly.

"You did that," Harry said icily.

Clearly, Hagrid didn't notice Harry's tone, because he continued to talk boastfully about it, "Yep, on Dumbledore's orders, o' course," Hagrid said.

"Who's Dumbledore? I know I've heard that name before," Harry practically demanded.

"Dumbledore's the Headmaster of Hogwarts, Harry. Great man, Dumbledore, great man. He's the only one You-Know-Who ever really feared," Hagrid said.

Harry's mind was racing. So Dumbledore's the reason I was stuck at the Dursleys'. He's the one responsible for me living in hell for the last ten years!

"It was nice to see you again, Hagrid, but we really do have a lot of shopping to do," Andromeda said.

"Oh, of course, don't let me stop ya, Andy. It's been nice ter see you again, 'Arry," Hagrid said as Harry, Tonks, and Mrs. Tonks began making their way toward the exit of the bank.

"Harry, change your appearance before we leave," Mrs. Tonks instructed.

Harry quickly made his scar disappear and changed his black hair back to blond.

When they left Gringotts, Mrs. Tonks turned to Harry and asked, "How much money did you withdraw?"

"Oh, I didn't withdraw any. Horik gave me 100 Galleons from his vault for my school supplies. Is that enough?" Harry asked.

Mrs. Tonks just stared at him open-mouthed. "Harry, what do you mean, he gave you 100 Galleons?"

"He said that he felt bad for what happened, and that they were going to add three percentage points of interest on all my vaults. Horik then gave me a bag of money with 100 Galleons in it. Is it enough money?" Harry asked.

"Harry, that's awesome! You are totally buying me ice cream later!" Tonks exclaimed, smiling at him.

“So it’s enough?” Harry asked.

“Harry, 100 Galleons will buy you the finest robes, cauldron, and supplies you can get,” Mrs. Tonks explained.

“Oh good,” Harry said with a smile.

“Merlin, look at the time! Harry, we are running really late. Tonks has already been measured for her robes, so can you go do that while we get your Potions supplies?” Mrs. Tonks asked.

“Err, sure. Where do I go?” Harry asked sheepishly.

“I’m sorry, dear. It’s Madam Malkins Robes for all Occasions and it’s the third store on the left. We’ll be at the apothecary if you somehow finish before us. It’s right over there,” Mrs. Tonks said, pointing to a large black building.

“Okay, no problem,” Harry said. He quickly walked down the cobblestone street and entered Madam Malkins.

“Hello, dear. Hogwarts?” a smiling woman asked pleasantly.

“Err, yes,” Harry said.

“Very well, go through that door. There is another boy being fitted right now as we speak,” the woman said, smiling at him.

Harry walked through the door and saw a blond haired boy getting fussed over by several people. When they saw Harry, a few people came over and started measuring him next.

“Hello. Hogwarts?” the blond boy drawled.

“Yep,” Harry replied.

“Is this your first year?”

“Yes. You?”

"Yes. Do you know what house you'll be in?" the boy asked.

"No, I just hope it isn't Gryffindor. My friend Tonks is in that house and while she's great, it seems to be filled with mindless idiots. Her mum said I'd be good in Ravenclaw, though," Harry said offhandedly.

"Ha! Well, you're right about Gryffindor being full of idiots. I suppose Ravenclaw wouldn't be bad though, not that I'll be in that house. My entire family has been in Slytherin, so I know I'll be in there," the boy said smugly.

"Slytherin, that's the one for cunning and ambitious people, right?" Harry asked.

"Yes, but if you don't know that, then I doubt you'll get in," the boy said snobbishly.

"Why's that?" Harry said, slightly annoyed.

"Because you obviously are a Muggleborn wizard," the boy drawled.

Harry snapped, he didn't like anything to do with his Muggle relatives or Dudley's friends. Before the snobbish white haired boy could react, Harry lunged at him from across the table and tackled him to the floor, shocking the people who were trying to measure them.

"Don't you ever insult me like that again! I don't want anything to do with Muggles, and my parents were a witch and wizard, I'll have you know!" Harry snarled.

"S-sorry, I just assumed...," the boy said, clearly surprised.

"You want to be a Slytherin, think before you speak next time," Harry said sharply.

"I'm really sorry. I...I didn't know. Father told me that when someone was unsure about Hogwarts, they are usually Muggleborn," the boy said.

“Well, maybe you should think for yourself and not just mindlessly listening to your father. I’m not Muggleborn, but I had to live with three terrible Muggles, so please don’t insult me by comparing me to them,” Harry said, practically spitting the word Muggle.

The blond boy, who looked like he wanted to argue when Harry insulted his father, started to apologize again when Harry finished speaking. “That must have been terrible, living with Muggles; no one should have to do that. Why didn’t you live with your parents?” he asked curiously.

“Because they were stupid and decided to fight against that Voldemort guy, I mean who cares if he wanted to kill Muggles! I wish I had known about magic sooner, so I could have killed my Muggle uncle and cousin,” Harry said quietly so only the boy could hear.

The blond boy’s eyes widened at the Dark Lord’s name, but he couldn’t help but smile at the way the other boy talked about Muggles.

“Well, it looks like you have a good sense of priorities. I’m sorry I misjudged you, you are definitely not a Muggleborn wizard,” the boy said. Then, very quietly, he leaned in and whispered, “You’d be great in Slytherin, we don’t let that Muggleborn filth into our house like all the other ones do. We also don’t allow blood traitors that side with them.”

Harry smiled. “I think I would be good in Slytherin.”

“Yeah, I’d say so. By the way, my name is Draco Malfoy. My family is one of the oldest pureblood lines in the wizarding world,” Draco said, his arrogance returning.

“That’s cool, “ Harry said, unsure what to say to the boy about that, “I don’t know if my family was like that, I’m still learning stuff about the magical world,” Harry said.

“Well, I can certainly help you out. What’s your name?” Draco asked.

Harry looked around at the people fixing his robes and motioned for Draco to lean towards him.

"My name's Harry Potter, but I'm in disguise because I'm apparently famous," Harry said quietly in the boy's ear.

"WHAT?! No way!" Draco screamed in shock.

"Can you excuse us for a second?" Harry asked everyone.

When no one made any attempt to move, Draco seemed to get impatient and started yelling. "Listen up, all of you. If you don't leave right now, I'll tell my father you are all incompetent, and he'll have your jobs faster than you can say Evanesco."

That got everyone's attention and they quickly left the room. When the last one left, Harry focused on what he really looked like and changed back.

"Oh Merlin, you weren't kidding! You're really Harry Potter!" Draco said in awe.

"Yep. I really am," Harry said, changing back. "Can you not let that get out though; I'm not in the mood to be mobbed by idiots right now."

"Yeah, no problem. I have to say I'm shocked, I mean, the Dark Lord killed your parents. He tried to kill you, and you still want to be a Slytherin? That was his house, you know," Draco said.

"I didn't know that. I don't really blame Voldemort. I mean, my parents never should have stood against him. I still don't understand why they did, Muggles are pathetic," Harry said.

"Wow. You know, my father would love to meet you. He was one of the people who helped the Dark Lord," Draco said, saying the last part very quietly.

"What? Really? But wouldn't he be in trouble? I heard that everyone who helped Voldemort got put in prison," Harry said quietly.

"No, not everyone. There are a lot of followers who didn't go to jail," Draco said smugly.

"I think I'd love to meet your dad," Harry said, grinning.

"Yeah... by the way, how did you change your appearance?" Draco asked.

"I'm a metamorphmagus; but don't tell anyone, okay? My friend is one, too. We are going to get so many Gryffindors in trouble this year. She's going to nick me a pair of Gryffindor robes, and we are going to take their appearance to get them in trouble," Harry said, his grin stretching ever wider.

"Ha, that'd be awesome! Why is your friend in Gryffindor? She sounds like a Slytherin through and through," Draco said.

"I know, I feel bad for her because she hates it so much. Everyone in Gryffindor makes fun of her because she's a metamorphmagus," Harry said sadly.

"I always knew father was right when he said Gryffindors were stupid. That's such a rare talent, she's going to have so many opportunities because of it, and so will you. Not that you need it, being Harry Potter. Father told me the Potter line is really old, just like ours. I'm sure you're loaded," Draco said.

"Ha, wouldn't surprise me, with the way the Goblins were treating me earlier today. Now, let's finish these stupid robes. I'll introduce you to my friend when we are done," Harry suggested.

"Alright, sounds good. You should probably change your appearance before those people come back inside. I wouldn't tell anybody I was a metamorphmagus if I were you. They'll probably make you register or something stupid like that," Draco said.

"Yeah, I already decided that I wasn't going to register," Harry said as he changed back, "Oh, and when we are in public don't call me Harry, I don't want anyone to get suspicious."

"Okay...what do you want me to call you?" Draco asked curiously.

"Dunno. How about James? That's my middle name," Harry said.

"Alright, sounds good, James," Draco said, trying out the new name.

Draco called the people back into the room and ten minutes later the two boys were both done. They paid for their robes and walked out of the store.

"My mother is getting my Potions supplies right now, and my father is getting my books. What do you need to get?"

"Well, my friend's mum is getting my Potions stuff, but I still need everything else. Tonks wanted to be with me when I got a wand, so where else can we go?"

"How much money did you bring with you?" Draco asked curiously.

"100 Galleons," Harry replied offhandedly.

Draco smiled approvingly, "That's what father said people should bring when they go shopping. He's going to love you, I can tell. I guess we can go look at some pets, that could be cool. I already have an eagle owl, but you are going to need something," Draco said as he walked him down the street towards a noisy shop.

The two boys walked into the shop and started looking around. "What do you think I should get?" Harry asked.

"Ugh, dunno. Let's go look at the snakes. We aren't allowed to bring them to Hogwarts, but they are still interesting and the symbol of Slytherin," Draco said.

"Alright; excuse me, ma'am, where are your snakes?" Harry asked politely.

"Oh, they are in the back. Would you like me to show them to you, dear?" she asked.

"Yes, please, I would," Harry said.

The woman led Harry and Draco to a back room where hundreds of snakes were sliding in their cages.

‘Ssstupid woman keeping me locked in thisss cage, I’ll bite her if ssshe triesss to touch me.’

‘Here comes the keeper with two bratsss.’

‘None are worthy.’

‘The one with white hair looksss good to eat.’

Harry was in shock as he listened to the snakes talk. He looked at Draco who seemed completely oblivious to it.

“Well, dear, is there any particular snake that you are looking for?” the shop keeper asked.

“Ugh... can I just look around?” Harry asked.

“Sure thing. When you find one you like, come and get me. Most of these things need to be defanged because they are dangerous,” the woman said.

‘Ssshe leavesss!’

‘Foolisssh woman! If either of thessse boysss pick me, I’ll bite them so fast.’

‘Ssshut up!’ Harry screamed.

Harry grinned when all the snakes stopped talking. He looked up at Draco whose eyes were wide in shock.

“Draco, you look like you’ve see a ghost,” Harry remarked.

“Y-y-you’re a Parselmouth!” Draco blurted out.

“I’m a what?” Harry asked confused.

"You can talk to snakes," Draco said.

"Oh, well, yeah. I bet loads of people can," Harry said, shrugging it off.

"No, Har-err James, it's a rare gift. The only people who can do it are decedents of Salazar himself!" Draco said in awe.

"Who?" Harry asked.

"Salazar Slytherin, the founder of Slytherin house. You must be his heir," Draco explained.

"Wow," Harry said. 'Isss that true?' Harry asked a snake.

'He'sss a ssspeaker! A ssspeaker has come!'

'Hail the ssspeaker, Hail the ssspeaker!' the snakes began to hiss in unison.

"I guess it's true," Harry said, grinning at Draco. "So you don't understand me when I speak to them?"

"No, I hear you talking like a snake. It's kind of creepy. You have to get a snake, Ha- James. You need one, now," Draco urged.

"You said they weren't allowed at Hogwarts, though," Harry said.

"So bloody what, you need to get one! You can just hide it in the dorm or something. If you're in Slytherin, no one will rat on you for having a snake, James," Draco said.

"I guess you're right," Harry said. "What should I get?"

"Get something dangerous," Draco said mischievously.

"Ha, yeah, and have it attack my Muggle relatives if I ever see them again," Harry said.

'I need a powerful sssnake. Who here can help me?' Harry asked, turning to the snakes.

The snakes all stared hissing.

'I will help you!'

'Ssspeaker, I can help you.'

'I will kill your enemiiesss.'

'I will be most loyal.'

'Who here isss the most dangerousss?' Harry asked.

There was silence for a while before several snakes started to hiss.

'Ssalazar is the most dangerousss.'

'Where is Sssalazar?' Harry asked.

'I am here,' a hissing voice called.

Harry grabbed Draco's arm and followed the voice till they reached a slick black snake with green lines running down its back.

'Sssalazar?' Harry asked.

'Yesss, sspeaker. I am Sssalazar, an Egyptian wizard asssp,' Salazar hissed proudly.

'What isss the difference between a regular asssp and a wizard asssp?' Harry asked.

'Unlike our cousinsss, we grow with our bonded wizard'sss power. I sssense you have great power, ssspeaker, I would grow very large,' Salazar said.

Harry could almost see the smile on the snake's face as it spoke to him. 'My name is Harry Potter and I am looking for a powerful companion, who will defend myself and my friends. Will you help me?' Harry asked.

'It would be my greatessst honor to pledge myssself to you, ssspeaker,' Salazar said, bowing his head.

Harry opened the top of the snake's cage, and Salazar slithered into his hand and up his shoulder. As soon as Salazar touched his hand, a red light seemed to form between the snake and him.

"What was that?" Draco asked.

"I just boned to the snake," Harry said as Salazar started to grow several inches.

'Thank you, massster. I have already grown much. We ssshall be great companions,' Salazar hissed.

'Yesss, we ssshall. Thisss isss my friend, Draco Malfoy. Do not harm him or my friend Tonks under any circumstances, do you understand?' Harry hissed.

'Yesss. I will protect the friendsss of the ssspeaker,' Salazar hissed and bowed his head at Draco. 'Hisss hair makesss him look like a rabbit, though.'

Harry howled with laughter and Draco looked mad. "What's funny?" Draco asked.

"He likes you, Draco, but he said your hair makes you look like a rabbit," Harry said, still laughing. "Come on, let's buy him and go," Harry said while Draco began sputtering indignantly.

'Massster, stop!' Salazar hissed as they approached the counter.

Harry grabbed Draco before he could call the sales clerk.

'Why? What'sss wrong?' Harry asked.

'You must not let the ssshop keeper drain me of my poissson,' Salazar hissed.

'Will ssshe take your poissson if I buy you?' Harry asked.

'Yesss,' Salazar replied.

'Then coil yourself around my stomach, Sssalazar. My robesss are large enough to hide you,' Harry instructed.

The snake nodded and coiled himself around Harry's midsection. When Salazar was secure, Harry nodded to Draco, and the two of them left the shop quickly.

Harry grinned when they were outside and instructed Salazar to just relax on his shoulders.

"Ha, that worked out well," Harry said, smiling at Draco.

"James, why didn't you pay for him? That was stupid. What if they had an anti-theft ward or something? I mean, you could have afforded to buy him without question," Draco said.

"Ugh. Anti-theft ward?" Harry asked hesitantly.

"Yes, it stops someone from stealing! Merlin, you are beyond lucky. I bet they didn't put the wards on the snakes themselves and just the tanks they were in," Draco said.

"Err, I guess that makes sense. I mean, how many people would be willing to grab a venomous snake and then leave with it?" Harry said sheepishly.

"Still, it was a stupid thing to do! How much could the little thing have cost? Ten, eleven Galleons?" Draco chided.

"Yeah, but had I bought him, the clerk would have drained Salazar of his poison. I couldn't have that, now could I?" Harry said, grinning at the shocked look on Draco's face.

"S-so he's really poisonous?" Draco stammered.

"Yep. Don't worry though, Draco, I already told him not to attack you or Tonks. Plus, he seemed to like you, rabbit," Harry said, laughing.

Draco grimaced at the nickname and the two boys began walking down the Alley. Draco showed Harry where to get his books, and they quickly bought them. After an hour, Harry said, "Well, I think that's everything but a wand, Draco. Let's find Tonks and get one."

"Okay, sounds good. I want to meet this Tonks. She sounds like the only Gryffindor I'll probably ever like," Draco said.

Harry and Draco walked towards the ice cream parlor when Harry spotted her.

"Tonks, hey!" Harry said, walking towards her.

"Harry, there you are! Mum has been going spare. Where have you been?" Tonks said, giving him a hug before leaping back at the sight of the snake that was wrapped across his shoulders.

"Relax, Tonks. Salazar isn't going to hurt you. Oh, and please call me James for right now," Harry chided.

"Oh, okay, James. So you named your snake after the founder of Slytherin. Well, I guess there goes any chance of you being a Gryffindor. Not that I can say I blame you," Tonks said, grinning at him.

"Hey Tonks, this is Draco Malfoy, we met while I was getting my robes," Harry said.

"Nice to meet you, Draco." Tonks said shaking his hand.

"Yeah, you too. From what James tells me, you're probably the only Gryffindor I'm ever going to talk to at Hogwarts," Draco said, smiling.

"Ha, I don't blame you!" Tonks said. "So, you guys want to get some ice cream?"

"Yeah, after that, we need to get my wand," Harry said.

“Yes! I was hoping that you didn’t forget that I wanted to get that with you,” Tonks said happily.

“Hey, give me some credit, Tonks. I mean, you told me a thousand times last night that you wanted to find out what kind of wand I would have,” Harry said, smiling.

The three kids ordered their ice creams and sat outside talking about school till Draco’s head shot up.

“Father!” Draco called out.

“Ah, Draco, there you are. Your mother has been looking for you for the last half hour. We told you to stay at the robes supplier after you were done, not eat ice cream,” the man chided.

“I’m sorry, father, but...but...” Draco looked pleadingly at Harry who gave him a nod. Draco got up and whispered “Father, that is Harry Potter. I met him at the robe store. He didn’t want anyone to know who he was, so he changed his appearance. He’s nothing like what you told me he would be. He hates Muggles and he claims that the Dark Lord was right about trying to kill them. He blames his own parents for their deaths because they tried to stop the Dark Lord. He’s also a Parselmouth and a metamorphmagus. He asked that we not call him Harry in public because he doesn’t want a scene; he wants to be known as James right now. He also wants to be a Slytherin, father, can you believe it!”

Harry watched as Draco’s father’s eyes grew wider and wider before he finally took a step back.

“James, it’s a real honor to meet you. You seem to have made quite the impression on my son. My name is Lucius Malfoy,” Mr. Malfoy said, extending a hand.

“It’s a pleasure, Mr. Malfoy. You have a great son. I hope we get to be in the same house,” Harry said, shaking his hand.

“Well, if what he just told me is true, then I have no doubt you’ll make an excellent Slytherin, James. Who is your friend?” Mr. Malfoy asked.

“This is Tonks, she’s starting her second year. She’s a Gryffindor, but don’t hold that against her. She hates her house, isn’t that right, Tonks?” Harry said.

“It’s true, Mr. Malfoy. I hate being a Gryffindor, I wish I was in any other house...well, maybe not Hufflepuff, because then I’d really be doomed,” Tonks said, causing Mr. Malfoy and Draco to laugh.

“Well, my dear, at least you realize it. I have no doubt that you will do great things in this world,” Mr. Malfoy said, smirking at her.

“Thank you, sir, James said something similar last night,” Tonks said, taking Harry’s hand and giving it a squeeze.

‘Massster, she likes you. She has much talent, I can sssenssse it,’ Salazar hissed, causing Harry to smile.

Harry noticed Draco and his father giving him a strange look. Obviously, they wanted to know what Salazar had just said.

‘Massster, the elder rabbit isss curioussss about you. He hasss a ssstrong aura around him. Nothing compared to what you could become, but he isss sstill powerful,’ Salazar hissed.

Harry smiled at Mr. Malfoy and gave him a little grin. “Mr. Malfoy, I have it on good authority that you are a strong wizard. Would you like to accompany Tonks, Draco, Salazar, and I to get a wand?”

“Salazar?” Mr. Malfoy asked curiously.

“Oh, that’s James’ snake,” Tonks said brightly.

“Ah, I would be honored, James. Are all of you ready to go now?” Mr. Malfoy asked, giving a slight bow.

They all looked at each other, nodded their heads, and made their way to a run down looking shop called Ollivander’s. They walked into

the shop and rang the bell. Harry was about to call for help when a voice said "Ah, Lucius. Twelve inches, maple and dragon heartstring, an amazing wand for dueling."

Harry looked at the old wizard with the silver and grey eyes. The man gave him the creeps.

"Yes, Mr. Ollivander," Mr. Malfoy said, crisply.

"Ah, Ms. Tonks, it has hardly been a year. I trust your wand is holding up well enough? Twelve and a half inches, unicorn hair, correct? An amazing wand for charms," Ollivander said.

"Yes sir, that was my best class last year." Tonks replied.

"Ah, and who do we have here? Obviously, the young Draco will need a wand and...ah, Mr. Potter, good to see you have finally decided to return. An interesting gift, metamorphmagus. Now, please, feel free to return to normal," Ollivander said.

Harry returned to his normal form and grinned at the man. "How did you know, sir?" Harry asked.

"Ah, we all have our secrets, don't we. Young Mr. Malfoy, you first. I'm sure you take after your father, and every other Malfoy, so let's go straight to the powerful dragon heartstring wands, shall we?" Ollivander said.

Mr. Ollivander handed Draco wand after wand, quickly snatching each wand away before Draco could do anything with it. Finally, Draco's face seemed to brighten and he flicked a wand, shooting several green sparks out it.

"Ah, bravo Draco! Lucius, your son has gotten the strongest dragon heartstring wand I've made since your own. I dare say the Malfoy tradition carries on again," Ollivander said.

"Well done, Draco," Mr. Malfoy said proudly.

"Thank you, father," Draco said, smiling as he looked upon his wand with pride.

"Now, Mr. Potter, let's see what we can do for you, shall we? Potters were always a difficult family to get a wand for. They never chose a specific core. Your great-grandfather still holds the record of two hours before finding a wand that suited him," Ollivander said, smiling at the memory.

Mr. Ollivander took several boxes off the shelf and handed them to Harry. Harry would raise his hand to make it work, but time and time again Mr. Ollivander would snatch it away. They did this for almost half an hour.

"I told you Potters were always tricky!" Ollivander said happily.

"It appears so, Mr. Ollivander," Lucius said, getting more and more interested as the stack of boxes began to pile up.

"Well, why not... a rare combination. Holly and Phoenix feather, eleven inches," Mr. Ollivander said, handing Harry a red wand.

As soon as Harry took the wand, he felt a great rush of power shoot through him.

'Massster, that is your wand. I've just grown a quarter of an inch,' Salazar said.

Harry laughed and gave the wand a wave showering the room in green and red sparks.

"It appears Mr. Potter has found a wand," Lucius said.

"Curious, very curious." Ollivander said, shaking his head.

"Excuse me, sir, but what is curious?" Harry asked.

"I remember every wand I've ever sold, Mr. Potter, and the Phoenix whose tail feather is in your wand gave another feather, just one. It's

curious that you would be destined for that wand when its brother gave you that scar,” Ollivander said causing gasps from everyone.

“You mean, that wand is the brother of the Dark Lord’s?” Lucius said in awe.

“That it is,” Ollivander replied.

Harry didn’t know what to say to that, so he quickly paid ten Galleons for his wand and exited the store after putting on his disguise.

“It has been a pleasure to meet you, James,” Lucius said. “I’m sure you and Draco will do great things. It’s about time the houses of Potter and Malfoy began to see eye to eye on things. Tonks, if I can ever do anything for you, please feel free to ask.”

“Thank you, Mr. Malfoy. I guess we’ll see you on September the first. I’ll let Ha-James borrow my owl though, so we can write each other.” Tonks smiled at the Malfoys.

“Sounds great!” Draco said excitedly. “See you guys on the first.”

Lucius gave one final nod to Harry and Tonks before placing a hand on Draco’s shoulder and disappearing with a crack.

“He seemed really nice. My mom never really liked the Malfoys, but what she doesn’t know won’t hurt her, right?” Tonks said.

“Why doesn’t she like the Malfoys?” Harry asked curiously.

“Oh, because Mr. Malfoy was rumored to have worked for You-Know-Who, but he seemed really nice. Now come on, let’s go find my mum before she kills us both,” Tonks replied.

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### Chapter 3. Birthday with the Family Part 1.

Harry grinned as he read Draco's letter for the third time that night.

Dear Harry,

My dad said that your birthday was on the 31st, and he agreed that you could spend it here at Malfoy Manor. The Quill that came with this letter is a portkey. It will activate at ten o'clock the morning of your birthday.

Draco

Harry had been very excited all day in anticipation.

'Calm down!' Salazar hissed.

'I'm sorry Salazar, but we are going to visit Draco today!'

'Yessss, yesss, yesss a visit to the rabbitssss' home.' Salazar replied as he slithered up Harry's arm and positioned himself around his shoulder and down his right arm.

Harry sprinted down the stairs as fast as he could, Salazar hissing his annoyance along the way.

"What are you so excited about?" Tonks asked as he ran downstairs on his birthday.

Harry showed her the Quill and grinned at his friends puzzled expression.

"It's a Quill, Harry." Tonks said flatly.

"It's something called a Portkey. Draco said it would activate at ten o'clock today and take me to Malfoy Manor to celebrate my birthday." Harry said unable to hide how excited he was.

"It's your birthday today! Why didn't you say something earlier this week? Or when we got back from Diagon Alley?" Tonks demanded.

Seeing that his friend was actually somewhat upset Harry grimaced. "I'm sorry Tonks, I-I just...I just never had anyone care if it was my birthday before." Harry replied sheepishly.

Tonks immediately softened and her eyes began to fill with unshed tears. "I'm so-so sorry Harry. I-I didn't mean to yell or anything. I guess I was just upset that I didn't get you a present. I wonder how Mr. Malfoy figured out it was your birthday though?"

"I dunno. I guess we can ask him when we go there." Harry said.

"We?" Tonks asked hesitantly.

"Well yea, I'm not going without you Tonks." Harry replied offhandedly.

Tonks jumped out of her chair and pulled Harry into a very fierce embrace. Harry was not suspecting anything like that and he lost his balance. The two children fell backwards and landed with a hard 'thump' on their backs.

"Ouch. Sorry Harry." Tonks said now very embarrassed.

"Why did you do that?" Harry asked as he rubbed the back of his now bruised head.

"Um...well. I-I wasn't ever invited to a birthday party before. I mean mum has thrown me birthday parties in the past, and some of her work friends dropped by to say hello and stuff, but I've never really been invited to a friend's party before." Tonks said with a tear falling down her face.

Harry scooted up next to her and pulled her into a hug. "Well it looks like it's a day of first for both of us, huh?"

"But...I...I don't have a present. I-I should have a present for you!" Tonks said as she began to cry.

Harry let Tonks cry into his shirt for a little before breaking the hug apart. He put his hands on her shoulders and looked at his friends

teary eyes. "Tonks, you are my friend. I've never gotten anything for my birthday before. For the first time though, I'm actually happy it's my birthday, and that I've got such a good friend."

Tonks whipped her eyes on a handkerchief and just smiled back at him. "Thanks Harry."

'Massster that object hasss magic building inssside it.' Salazar hissed from his arm.

"Tonks what time is it!" Harry screamed.

"OH IT'S ONLY A MIMUTE TILL TEN!" Tonks said quickly as she pulled him back up towards the table and grabbed the quill using her free hand.

Not a second later the portkey activated and Harry and Tonks found themselves being pulled behind their naval through space. A moment later they crashed on a wood floor.

"Ugh. Did you catch the number of that bus?" Harry asked shaking his head.

"HARRY!" Draco called excitedly from across the room.

Harry and Tonks both turned to see a grinning Draco Malfoy striding towards him.

"Tonks you came too awesome!" Draco said now very excited.

"Good to see you again Draco." Harry said extending his hand for a handshake momentarily forgetting that Salazar was wrapped around that arm.

Draco shook Harry's hand enthusiastically, but then jumped when he saw the black and green asp curled along Harry's arm.

'Rabbit.' Salazar hissed menacingly.

'Salazar be nice.' Harry reproached.

“Salazar says hello Draco.” Harry said with a grin.

“Er did he really?” Draco asked hesitantly.

“Well no he just said “rabbit,” but I’m sure he meant nice to see you again.” Harry said with a grin as he and Tonks laughed at the look of indignation on Draco’s face.

“You’d better tell that snake to watch its self.” Draco said in a mock-threat.

“Ha. I think Salazar can handle himself Draco.” Tonks said with a grin as the Snake rose it’s torso up and locked eyes with Draco, who blanched.

“If you are through terrifying my son Salazar, I’d like to welcome you to Malfoy Manor.” Lucius said from the doorway.

“Hello Mr. Malfoy.” Harry said with a grin.

“Please Harry call me Lucius in private.” Lucius replied.

“Very well Lucius, I brought Tonks with me. I hope that wasn’t a problem.” Harry said shortly.

“Not at all Harry, the more the merrier. It’s good to see you again Tonks.” Lucius replied.

“You too Mr. Malfoy.” Tonks replied with a smile clearly glad that she was welcome.

“Come now you three. My wife has been ordering the house elves around all day to make sure you have a good birthday, Harry. You’d think that it was Draco’s birthday with the effort she was putting into this little endeavor.” Lucius said with a grin.

Harry smiled and blushed at Lucius’ comment. “Really sir, Mrs. Malfoy doesn’t have to do all that.”

"Nonsense Harry. Draco was so excited when I told him about your upcoming birthday. I think Narcissia has taken it as a challenge to throw you the best party she could think of." Lucius replied with a grin.

"By the way sir, how did you find out it was my birthday today?" Harry asked.

"Oh well I'm rather close to Minister Fudge and he let me have a little peek in your file to find out when your birthday happened to be." Lucius replied with a grin.

"Ah well that explains it." Harry said.

The four of them walked for a while before Tonks came to an abrupt stop. Harry stopped walking as well and Lucius and Draco noticing they were suddenly alone turned to see where the two of them were.

Harry found Tonks staring out the window in complete shock. Harry followed her view and gasped. Before him was the largest front yard he had ever seen. There had to be at least five hundred yards of fountains and greenery till you got to the gate of the manor. Harry completely stunned just like Tonks.

"Enjoying the view?" Draco said with a grin.

Tonks and Harry snapped out of their gaze and just shook their heads. "It's really impressive." Tonks said with awe.

"Yes, Draco's Great-Great-Great-Great-Great Grandfather Andrew Malfoy commissioned the gardens and this house. It's been in the family for almost five hundred years now." Lucius said with a grin.

"Wow. That's impressive." Harry said.

'I would like to hunt the ground master, may I go?' Salazar asked curiously.

"Salazar would like to know if he could go hunt the grounds?" Harry asked.

“But of course, tell him that there is a nasty pack of wild field mice disrupting the western hedges. If he could take care of them, it would save Trixie a lot of time.” Lucius replied.

‘Salazar you have his permission. He also says that there is a pack of field mice in the western hedges. Happy hunting my friend.’ Harry hissed.

Salazar bowed to Harry and then turned and bowed his thanks to Lucius before slithering off down the hallway.

“An interesting familiar you have Harry.” Lucius remarked with a grin.

“I would have to agree. The lil’ bugger scared mum nearly to death when she first saw him.” Tonks said with a smirk.

The walk to the drawing room wasn’t much further and as soon as Harry stepped through the door he was in shock. Floating magically in the center of the room were Silver and Green letters that read, “Happy Birthday Harry.” A silver and green snake seemed to slither around the words.

“This...this is incredible.” Harry stammered.

“Well I should hope so Dobby, Trixie, and Emily spent all day preparing it.” A female voice said from the side.

Harry turned and saw a very aristocratic looking woman with platinum blond hair much like Draco’s.

“Mrs. Malfoy I presume?” Harry asked tentatively.

“It’s Narcissia, Harry.” Narcissia replied kindly.

“Well Narcissia, I don’t know what to say. This is amazing I can’t believe you did this for me.” Harry replied.

“Well you are most certainly welcome, Harry. Now please everyone sit down.” Narcissia said as she motioned towards a green leather couch.

Harry's eyes momentarily grew wide when some food magically appeared on the table in front of them.

"So Harry, Draco tells me you are looking to be placed in Slytherin?" Narcissia asked.

"Yes ma'am." Harry replied.

"You are aware that most of the wizarding world expects you to be the perfect Gryffindor right?" Narcissia asked with a grin.

Harry and Tonks couldn't help but to laugh out loud causing Mrs. Malfoy to look on curiously.

"I'm sorry ma'am, but Harry would never be a Gryffindor. I mean sure he's got the courage thing, but the day a parseltouge goes into Gryffindor is the day I leave Hogwarts." Tonks replied with a grin.

"P-p-parseltouge!" Narcissia stuttered in shock. Noticing that she was the only one surprised by this revelation she turned to Lucius. "You knew this!" She said darkly.

"That I did Narcissia. Draco informed me when we were in Diagon Alley. Harry has an amazing Egyptian Wizarding Asp. I wouldn't be surprised if it managed to evolve into an Occamy under Harry's care." Lucius said with a grin.

"Excuse me? What do you mean evolve into an Occamy?" Harry asked.

"Oh well. It's well known that Occamies are just regular magical snakes who manage to eat a magical owl." Lucius replied with a grin. "I do believe a fully venomous Egyptian Wizard's Asp would have no problem taking down even the strongest Eagle owl. On that note, Draco make sure that Salazar and Omar never meet." Lucius said with a grin.

"Omar?" Harry asked.

"That's the family's eagle owl." Draco said. "And don't worry father I'll make sure they never meet."

"Oh I don't know Salazar is a little sneaky devil." Harry replied with a grin.

"Enough of this. How about we get to your present?" Draco said with a big grin.

"You didn't have to get me anything, Mr. Malfoy, your hospitality was enough." Harry said quickly.

"Nonsense Harry," Mr. Malfoy said waving him off, "we got you two presents. One is a practical one from Narcissia and myself. The other one is something Draco and I believe you will enjoy very much." Lucius replied with a grin as he took out two small boxes and placed them on the table.

"Engorgio!" Lucius said pointing his wand at the boxes.

Harry's eyes rose to the ceiling as the two boxes expanded in size. Harry reached for the much smaller of the boxes. Harry nervously unwrapped the package and found it to be a book. The 100 Ancient Families of Europe by Orian .

"I think you will find that book very useful, Harry. It has an entire chapter on each family. The Potter line is one of the oldest wizarding families. I believe that you should get a chance to know your heritage." Narcissia said smiling.

"Wow. Thank you!" Harry said as he excitedly flipped to the chapter on the Potters. Harry's eyes bulged when he landed on the chapter. Underneath a golden griffin with a sword in its mouth was the name Potter. Harry quickly skimmed the text. He found out that his family was one of the few families that intermarried with Godric Gryffindor and since the Gryffindors had a link to Merlin the Potters did as well.

"I'm related to Merlin!" Harry said in shock.

"No way let me see that!" Tonks screamed.

Harry handed her the text and she gasped as she saw the connection between Ambrosia and Gryffindor and then from Gryffindor to Potter.

"Yes Harry your family is very old indeed. The Malfoy's are actually equally as old we are related to Morgan La Fay." Lucius said proudly.

"Wow. Hey Tonks do you think that your family would be in this book?" Harry asked curiously.

"Ugh...I doubt it." Tonks said sheepishly.

"Why you never know." Harry said not noticing her friend's discomfort.

Obviously Draco didn't pick up her discomfort either and asked, "Tonks what's your surname?"

"Oh, so I guess Tonks' aren't that old of a family then. I'm sorry Tonks." Harry replied sheepishly.

"Wait just a moment! Your surname is Tonks?" Narcissia asked.

"Yes. I hate my first name so I go by my surname." Tonks replied sheepishly.

"Nymphadora." Narcissia said quietly, but loud enough for everyone including Tonks to hear her.

"How do you know my name." Tonks asked curiously.

"Are you Andi's daughter?" Narcissia asked now on the edge of her seat.

"Andi?" Tonks asked.

"Andromeda are you Andromeda's daughter?" Narcissia asked now with persistence.

Tonks and Harry noticed Lucius and Draco looking at her now with a great deal of interest.

“Yes, she’s my mum.” Tonks said now a little nervous.

Tonks and Harry watched as the three Malfoys’ mouths opened like a fish.

Noticing no one was going to explain anything Harry asked, “Um how do you know Mrs. Tonks, Narcissia?”

This seemed to snap everyone out of their shock. “Oh dear didn’t your mother ever tell you about me?” Narcissia asked a little hesitantly.

When Tonks shook her head in the negative, Narcissia let out a hiss of annoyance.

“Dear I’m your mother’s sister, your aunt.” Narcissia said bluntly.

“WHAT!” Tonks yelled in shock.

“It’s true. I can’t believe she never told you about me.” Narcissia said now clearly annoyed.

“I have an aunt.” Tonks said in disbelief.

”And a cousin.” Harry said pointing to Draco who looked equally as stunned.

”And a cousin.” Tonks replied in shock.

“Wait so your real name is Nymphadora?” Draco said with a bit of a grin.

Tonks growled at Draco, “Watch it Draco, we maybe cousins, but that won’t stop me from hexing you for calling me that.”

That seemed to break the ice and everyone began to laugh.

“Wait so you and my mum were sisters? Why didn’t she ever tell me about you?” Tonks asked.

"Well actually your mother and I were triplets. Your mother was the middle child and I was the youngest." Narcissia said before she could stop herself.

"Wait so I have another aunt or an uncle! Who? Why don't I know any of this?" Tonks asked quickly.

Narcissia shot a worried look to Lucius who simply shrugged and urged her to continue.

"Your other aunt is Bellatrix Lestrangle" Narcissa said.

Tonks gasped at the news. "Bellatrix Lestrangle is my aunt." Tonks said her face now white as a sheet.

"Yes." Narcissia replied.

"Oh Merlin no wonder mum never mentioned her." Tonks said quickly.

"Whose Bellatrix Lestrangle?" Harry asked.

"She was one of You-Know-Who's most loyal followers. After you managed to defeat him, she drove the Longbottom's into insanity believing that he was really alive! She's been in Azkaban for the last 10 years!" Tonks said quickly.

"Oh." Harry said unsure of what say to this.

"Oh! Harry I'm related to a murder. No I'm related to a psychopath!" Tonks screamed.

"Tonks calm down." Harry said.

"WAIT JUST ONE SECOND! DOES THAT MEAN MY MOTHER WAS A BLACK!" Tonks screamed.

Narcissia nodded her head. "We were the Black Triplets."

"Oh Merlin! I'm related to most infamous dark magic family ever! Mum always told me metamorphmagus' ran in her family, but she never told me what that family was!" Tonks screamed.

"You're a metamorphmagus?" Narcissia asked quickly.

"Yea." Tonks said absentmindedly.

"Me too." Narcissia said as she turned her platinum blond hair neon blue.

Tonks' shock about being a Black disappeared briefly and she copied Narcissia's hair color. Not to be outdone, Harry changed his own hair to match theirs causing Narcissa to gasp in shock.

"Harry you're a metamorphmagus as well!" Narcissia screamed.

"Yep." Harry said proudly.

"But...Potter's have never been Metamorphmaguses." Narcissia stuttered.

"Well I guess I'm the first." Harry replied.

"That's not possible! Metamorphmagus is a genetically transferred ability you don't just become the first to be it!" Narcissia screamed.

"Maybe it was from my mum then." Harry said casually.

"I ALWAYS KNEW IT! I ALWAYS SUSPECTED! LUCIUS DIDN'T I TELL YOU! I TOLD YOU LILY EVANS COULDN'T HAVE BEEN MUGGLEBORN!" Narcissia screamed.

"Dear calm down you don't know that." Lucius said calmly.

"Lucius he's a metamorphmagus. The Potters have never had that ability only the Blacks, Bones, and Delacroix have ever had that talent! Lily must have been adopted or maybe come from a squib line! We must contact Gringotts and perform a blood purity test on Harry!" Narcissia screamed.

"Um excuse me? What are you talking about?" Harry asked.

"Oh I'm sorry dear. Your mother was an incredibly talented witch. I never believed her to be muggleborn she had too much innate talent. She was my charms tutor. I was a seventh year and she was a fifth and she was tutoring me, ha. I always new that she couldn't have been muggleborn this proves it!" Narcissia said triumphantly.

"Narcissia this really doesn't prove anything. Besides Lily was a charms protégé everyone knew that." Lucius said in an attempt at pacifying his wife.

"Lucius what are the odds that something as rare as a protégé occurs in muggleborns?" Narcissia said sharply.

"Dear we've been over this it's almost nonexistent." Lucius replied.

"Exactly Lily had to have some old magical blood in her! That and Harry's ability as a Metamorphmagus proves it! Lily Potter one way or another came from a pure blood line!" Narcissia screamed.

"Father it would also explain Harry's parseltounge!" Draco said excitedly.

Lucius looked pensive, but finally relented, "Fine we'll take Harry for a blood purity and family talent test before you three get on the express. That will settle this once and for all."

"Family talent test? Purity Test?" Harry asked curiously.

"Oh sorry Harry. Those are spells that Goblins can do for a rather large fee. It will reveal if you have any inert talents like Empathy or Animagus skill. Normally someone will go at age sixteen when their magic is more refined, but the family talent test is normally free with the blood purity test, which costs significantly more. Normally the blood purity test is used to confirm inheritance and lordship acceptances." Lucius said.

"Wow." Harry said.

"Um Mrs. Malfoy?" Tonks asked.

"Please call me aunt Narcissia, Nymphadora." Narcissia said kindly.

"Um ok. Aunt Narcissia, why didn't my mom ever tell me about you? I mean I understand why she would never bring up Bellatrix, but why not you?" Tonks asked weakly.

Narcissia signed heavily. "Nymphadora, your mother was a...a...well I guess the word rebel works."

"Rebel! My mum?" Tonks asked in shock.

Narcissia laughed slightly at Tonks gaping mouth. "Oh yes, she had a strong rebellious streak. She was very close to our cousin Sirius who was the first Gryffindor the Black family ever had. Well your mother had a marriage contract to the second male child of the Lestrangle's, but young Rabastian had been caught in service to the Dark lord and sent to Azkaban. The contract was suspended indefinitely."

"What no one in the family knew was that Andi was seeing your father. A one Ted Tonks behind everyone's back. When Rabastian went to jail, our mother began putting out offers for another marriage contract for Andi. Within a few weeks, she had received several positive owls from a lot of powerful pureblood families."

"Apparently Andi found one of the letters and freaked out. I think she thought that with Rabastian behind bars and the contract void that she was free. It was no secret that she didn't exactly follow the Black family's ideas on being a proper witch. Your mother decided I guess that she'd had enough though. She fled the house, and before we realized it was married. Mother was furious. Bellatrix I believe was all set to go and kill your father for defiling the Black name."

"What happened to my father?" Tonks asked quietly. "Mum only told me that the dark lord killed him."

"Merlin child your mother has kept a lot from you. Well let me first tell you that your father wasn't the brightest of men. Brave yes, but smart

absolutely not. He was from a muggle family and had no clue about wizarding customs and traditions. He was in the Leaky Cauldron one day apparently and was speaking with a business colleague about the recent attacks on muggle born and half bloods by the dark lord. He called the dark lord a coward who struck during the night as well as a pathetic excuse of a wizard." Narcissia said.

"HE WHAT! DID HE HAVE A DEATH WISH!" Tonks screamed.

"I don't know dear, but there was a reporter sitting next to their table and she wrote down every last bit of the conversation. It appeared on the front page of the prophet the next day with the headline, "Diagon Alley Shop Owner Calls Out Dark Lord." Needless to say the dark lord took offense. I mean how could he not." Narcissia said simply.

Tonks was just shaking her head in disbelief. "What happened?"

"The dark lord showed up the next morning in his shop and called out your father for an honor duel. Your father being a muggle born had no clue what that really was. Your father agreed to a public duel in the center of Diagon Alley, but when the dark lord turned his back to walk out the store your father tried to curse him. It turned out to be the last thing he ever did." Narcissia said shaking her head in irritation.

"Why?" Tonks asked again hesitantly.

"This my dear is why we are against Muggle borns learning magic. They just don't understand our customs and traditions. By accepting the dark lord's honor duel, your father entered a magically binding contract. When he tried to curse the dark lord's back, he violated that contract and magic itself killed your father for his own stupidity." Narcissia said.

Everyone was silent as Tonks let a few tears roll down her face. Harry was about to pull her into a hug when Tonks got really angry, jumped up, and started to scream.

"YOU MEAN TO TELL ME! THAT MY FATHER," Harry noticed her spit the word father, "WAS STUPID ENOUGH TO INSULT A DARK

LORD. THEN ON TOP OF THAT VIOLATE A MAGICALLY BINDING CONTRACT!" Tonks screamed.

The three Malfoy's were taken aback for a moment before Lucius spoke up. "I'm sorry dear, but it's true. I was in the alley that day. I saw it all happen. That's why Narcissia knows so much."

Harry looked on as Tonks began to wail uncontrollably. "I...I...Mum always told me he died bravely...fighting...the...Dark Lord." Tonks said through her tears.

Harry quickly pulled her into a hug. "Sssh Nym it's alright. Really it is."

"Harry, my father was a coward." Tonks balled.

"He didn't understand magic Nym. He was muggle born he was ignorant. He never should have been allowed at Hogwarts in the first place." Harry said softly.

"Do you really believe that?" Tonks sniffed.

"I do Nym. I don't like Muggles my relatives," Harry spat the word, "have shown me exactly what they think of magic."

"I...I guess your right." Tonks said dejectedly. "I always thought that people like my dad deserved to learn magic, but they clearly never understood. Look at me though I'm ruining your birthday with my blubbering."

"Tonks you're more important to me then my birthday you know that." Harry said in her ear so the Malfoy's couldn't hear.

"R-really?" Tonks whispered.

"Tonks you were my first ever friend I ever had of course you are." Harry whispered back.

"Well as your friend I'm telling you to open your other present!" Tonks said her grin returning although Harry could see it was a little forced.

Harry smiled back at her. "Only if you help me open it." Harry said with a grin.

Tonks smiled back and said, "Only if you insist!"

The two kids quickly tore into the large package. When all the paper was gone, Tonks gasped. "Harry it's a Nimbus 2000 racing broom!"

"Mr. Malfoy! Er-Lucius I can't accept this it's too much!" Harry said quickly trying to push the broom away.

"No Harry we insist. Draco will need someone to fly with after all he got a Nimbus 2000 for his birthday earlier this summer." Lucius said with a grin.

"Yea Harry come on let's go out back to the pitch!" Draco said with a smile.

"Er well I've never been on a broom before." Harry said still in shock.

"Me either." Tonks said absentmindedly.

"Well then, Narcissia and I will just have to grab some of our old brooms and give you two a flying tutorial now wont we dear?" Lucius said.

"Oh, indeed we'll be able to see what position best suits you two. Lucius was a star beater for Slytherin and I was a great keeper for the Slytherin as well. Tonks your mother was a chaser for Ravenclaw back in the day and Harry your father was a seeker for Gryffindor if memory serves." Narcissia said with a grin.

"Ok. Let's go!" Harry said jumping up excitedly pulling Tonks up with him.

A/N2 Well there it is I finally updated! I'm sorry for such a long time between updates, but what can I say Rise of Darkness, Vampire's Kiss, and now Corruption of the Soul take precedent. I'm sorry if you like this story more then the other three, but I'm doing my best. I was going to at first combine the next chapter and this one to make one big birthday chapter, but I decided to post what I had right now.

Also, Corruption of the Soul will be updated this Friday at 8pm EST! If you haven't started to read it, I would highly recommend it as I believe it could become my best story.

Finally REVIEW PEOPLE!

## Chapter 5

### Birthday with the Family part 2

Harry and Tonks followed the Malfoys outside of their house. They walked for a few minutes before Draco stopped and said, "Welcome to Nathaniel Pitch."

Harry let out a gasp when he looked down from the hill they were standing on. Floating some eighty feet in the air were six massive rings as well as several stands. Harry had never seen a game of Quidditch, but he knew what he was seeing had to be impressive as Tonks was looking just as floored by what she saw.

"You have a standard professional pitch." Tonks said in quiet awe.

Harry leaned in curiously and asked, "Tonks what's a standard professional pitch?"

"I believe I can answer that, Harry." Lucius said with a grin. "You see normal house Quidditch pitches don't have stands or a full sized field; however, my grandfather Nathaniel Malfoy was an international Quidditch star. He would typically hold a charity tournament before every upcoming season. A lot of famous Quidditch players and politicians would show up so naturally the press came as well. One year he decided that having people stand on the ground just wasn't what a good host should do so he built the stands."

"Wow." Harry replied dumbly.

Everyone arrived at the center of the pitch and Harry noticed that Draco, Narcissia, and Lucius had placed their brooms on the ground. Narcissia handed Tonks Draco's old cleansweep 7 and Tonks nervously placed it on the ground in front of her.

"Now Tonks have you had any flying lessons at Hogwarts?" Lucius asked.

Harry saw Tonks blush furiously and hang her head. "Um well I was sort of in the hospital wing the week of the flying lessons." Tonks admitted.

"Oh dear that's terrible. I mean if you were there an entire week it must have been serious." Narcissa said.

"It must have been very serious dear, I went to school with Madam Pomfrey and everyone knew she had the gift of healing. She was apprenticing with the matron by her 4th year." Lucius said.

"It...er...it was serious." Tonks said.

"What happened dear?" Narcissa asked in what she hoped was a concerned aunt voice.

"Um my skin reacted poorly to a prank the Weasley twins did too me." Tonks said darkly.

Harry felt himself squeezing his hands so tight that they were beginning to turn white. I swear I will teach those twins a lesson when I get to Hogwarts. No one messes with Tonks. I wonder if Salazar would like to eat their owl as a snack. Lucius said he could become an Occammy or something if he did. Harry looked up and saw that Tonks looked rather uncomfortable talking about whatever the Weasley twins had done to her. Screw their owl I'll just let Salazar have one of the twins for the snack. Harry was brought out of his dark thoughts by Lucius' spoken animosity.

"Damn Weasley's! Dear I'm sorry that you have to put up with them dear. If they do anything that hospitalizes you again, let me know. I'm on the board of governors for Hogwarts." Lucius said

"No Mr. Malfoy, er Uncle Lucius, I wouldn't want to make any problems for you." Tonks said quickly.

"Dear you are family, it wouldn't be any problem. Truthfully it would be better then Christmas to get Arthur Weasley's sons into trouble." Lucius said smiling.

Lucius noticed that odd looks Harry and Tonks were giving him after that statement and he decided to elaborate. "You see, I've never gotten along with the Weasley patriarch. He's been trying to nab me for dark artifacts for years if you can believe it." Lucius said with annoyance.

"Yea I'll make sure Tonks files any problem too you Lucius. The more Tonks tells me about these twins the more I hate them." Harry replied darkly.

"Yes well the Weasley's are among the poorest purebloods you'll ever meet both socially and monetarily. Arthur is so obsessed with muggles that sometimes I think he might actually be one." Lucius said with a sarcastic drawl.

"Dear let's talk about less angry subjects like teaching Harry and Tonks about flying." Narcissia said shifting the conversation.

"You are right my dear as usual." Lucius said with a grin.

"Now I want you two to place your hand over your brooms and say 'up'." Narcissia said.

Harry and Tonks looked at each other, shrugged, and said 'up'. Harry was very happy to see that his broom flew up into his hand instantly. He was grinning wildly until he saw that Tonks' broom hadn't moved. Tonks tried another three times to no avail and Harry saw that tears were threatening to fall.

Harry walked calmly over to her, "Tonks, don't worry about it so much. It's just a stupid broom."

Tonks laughed and looked at Harry with a smile. "Up" She said this time with a little more confidence and everyone smiled as the broom quickly flew up into her hand. "I did it!" She screamed happily.

"Congratulations dear." Narcissia said.

"Can we please get into the air now?" Draco drawled with annoyance, but everyone saw the wink and reassuring smile he gave to Tonks.

“Alright now just push off the ground with both hands on the broom.” Lucius said. “Now remember to do so slowly...”

Lucius’ sentence was cut off though as he watched Harry and Tonks rocket off the ground and fly a good 60 feet into the air before they leveled off their brooms.

The three Malfoys on the ground quickly snapped out their shock and flew after them.

Up in the air, Tonks was momentarily freaking out at being so high. Harry on the other hand was happier then he’d ever been. He leaned his broom forward and flew right up to Tonks. “This is amazing isn’t it!” Harry yelled as he removed both hands from the broom to gesture wildly.

Tonks smiled at her first friend’s enthusiasm, her fear now ebbing away.

“You know you two, typically on someone’s first flying lesson they don’t just shoot up as fast as they can.” Lucius said.

“But this is so amazing!” Harry screamed as he rocketed around the pitch. He didn’t know how he knew how to handle his new broom so well, but when he was in the air it was like a part of him was complete.

As Harry raced around the pitch doing aerial maneuvers no first timer should know, he missed the look of complete shock that was on the three Malfoys and Tonks’ faces.

“He’s a natural father.” Draco said in awe as his friend flew up another forty feet only to flip over and dive downwards.

“I wouldn’t be surprised, Draco. His father led Gryffindor to four straight Quidditch cups.” Narcissia said as she watched Harry do increasingly dangerous maneuvers like they were nothing.

Tonks summoned all her Gryffindor courage and said, “Well if Harry can do it on his first try then so can I.” With that, she leaned her

broom forward like she saw Harry do it and raced after him. She loved the feeling of the wind in her hair as she raced off towards Harry. When she finally reached where he was, she had a satisfied smirk on her face.

"So Tonks, race you around the pitch." Harry said with a smile.

"You are so on!" Tonks yelled back.

"Pity I'm going to be the one to win." Draco drawled flying up next to them.

"I doubt that son." Lucius said grinning.

"Well I'll watch as someone has to make sure that you all don't kill each other." Narcissia grinned.

Harry, Tonks, Draco, Lucius, and Narcissia landed five and a half hours later. Lucius had brought out some Quidditch balls and the five of them had played a number of two on two games with one person refereeing. Harry and Lucius ended up winning the most games going 5-1, but each pairing had one at least one game. When they landed, Draco had a huge grin split across his face.

"We are so going to win the Quidditch cup this year!" Draco screamed.

"I thought ickle first years weren't allowed to play?" Tonks said smiling.

"Actually, in Slytherin house, the best players always play, but usually first years can't make it through the tryouts. I don't think there has been a first year who tried out for Slytherin since your godfather did, Draco." Lucius said with a grin.

"Who's your godfather?" Tonks asked curiously.

"Severus Snape." Draco replied with a grin.

Tonks' face must have shown considerable shock because the three Malfoys broke out into huge fits of laughter.

"What's so bad about Severus Snape?" Harry asked Tonks.

"Oh he's the potions teacher at Hogwarts. He hates me to put it simply." Tonks replied.

"Why?" Harry asked.

"Well it's enough that I'm a Gryffindor, but I'm also kind of clumsy." Tonks admitted.

"No you're not." Harry said.

"Well, um I'm actually really shocked that I haven't been around you." Tonks said blushing slightly.

"Dear, I can explain the clumsiness." Narcissia said smiling.

"Really?" Tonks asked hopefully.

"Can I assume that you've been in your natural form around Harry or have just made slight facial adjustments like to your hair?" Narcissia asked.

"Yes, that's right I've just been adding highlights to my hair lately." Tonks said.

"Well dear, when you change a larger aspect of your appearance like muscle mass or height, your center of gravity shifts slightly. It takes some time to readjust your body, and if you continue to shift you'll just continue to throw yourself off. Even in your natural form." Narcissia said smiling.

"Why didn't anyone tell me this before!" Tonks screamed waving her hands around wildly.

"Well it's a trade secret." Narcissia said smiling.

Harry just smiled as Tonks pouted about not knowing that bit of metamorphmagus informatin.

‘Massster are we ready to depart from the rabbitssss?’

Harry looked around wildly before spotting Salazar slithering towards them.

‘Ah Ssssalazar, how wasss your hunting?’ Harry hissed back.

‘It wasss pleasssent.’ Salazar hissed as Harry picked him up and placing him around his neck.

‘Ssso are we finisshed here?’ Salazar hissed again.

Harry took a look at his watch and nodded slightly they had to be gone before Tonks’ mum came back from work.

“Tonks it’s almost 6 we really should get going.” Harry said.

“Merlin, I can’t believe it’s almost six where did the day go?” Tonks asked.

”Ha, well time flies when you and I are breaking Harry and my father’s unbeaten record on the pitch doesn’t it.” Draco said with a smile, which Tonks returned.

”I still say you were lucky, Draco.” Lucius said with a grin.

”Now father 5-1 is still good. It’s just that Tonks and I finally figured out your ingenious strategy of get the Quafill to Harry and let him score.” Draco said with a grin.

”Yes well I’ve never seen anyone actually pull their keeper to act as another chaser just to keep up with that one player’s scoring before.” Lucius chided him.

“Well it worked didn’t it? I mean 11-9 is still a victory, father.” Draco said.

”That it is.” Lucius said.

When it was finally time to leave, Lucius handed Tonks and Harry three portkey's after Tonks gave them the coordinates for the park near their home.

"Now remember, your extra portkey will take you two to Gringotts tomorrow morning at 1pm so that Harry can get his tests done." Lucius reminded them.

"We remember, sir, and thank you for the best birthday I've ever had." Harry said as he shook Mr. Malfoy's hand.

"Think nothing of it Harry." Lucius said with a smile.

While Harry said goodbye to Draco, Narcissia and Tonks were saying goodbye.

"Bye Aunt Narcissia." Tonks said with tears in her eyes.

"Bye Nymphadora." Narcissia said as the two embraced in a tight hug.

"Will you be coming to Gringotts tomorrow?" Tonks asked doing her best to ignore the use of her first name.

"I will. I'll see you there dear. Now you'd better get home before Andi freaks out, and remember don't mention this to your mother. We aren't on the best speaking terms." Narcissia said sadly.

"I won't." Tonks replied as she took her portkey and disappeared with Harry.

Surry, England

Harry and Tonks appeared at the park between their houses and they began the short walk back to Tonks' home.

"So, that was, er an interesting birthday party." Tonks said weakly.

"Tonks are you ok with everything you learned?" Harry asked with some concern.

"No, not really, Harry. I mean I thought my dad was a hero of sorts. You know stood up to the big bad dark lord, but he was a coward Harry. A big bloody coward, and then my mum went and lied to me about it. I don't know how I'm going to face her." Tonks said as some tears fell down her cheek.

"Tonks, your mum was probably just trying to protect you from the truth. It's easier to say that your father died fighting the dark lord than it is to say his own magic killed him for violating a magical contract." Harry replied.

"I know and I even somewhat understand why she did it Harry, but still I-I mean my mum should have told me the truth." Tonks said sadly.

"You're right, she should have." Harry said.

The two walked in silence for a while before Tonks started to talk again. "What do you think of my aunt Narcissia?"

"I think she's very nice Tonks. You're really lucky to have an extended family as nice as the Malfoys." Harry said with a smile.

"I know. Draco was so nice to me even though I was a Gryffindor, but a part of me thinks that they wouldn't have been if I wasn't with you." Tonks admitted.

"Tonks that's not true. You saw how much your aunt's eyes lit up when she realized who you were. She was so happy to have a niece in her life, Tonks. If anything the Malfoys like me more because I brought you into the family." Harry said.

"But Harry, I'm not pure-blood." Tonks said.

"Neither am I, Tonks. Look I know that they seem to be really into the blood purity thing, and I'll be honest, I can understand why. I really don't like muggles. I have never had a reason to like them. I don't trust them, and all they've shown me is cruelty. I know it's kind of hypocritical of me to say I hate muggleborns when my own mother apparently was one..."

"But Harry she might not be, and if you turn out to be pure blood then only I wouldn't be." Tonks said weakly.

Harry stopped walking and grabbed Tonks' shoulder. "Hey Tonks, regardless of whether or not those tests show I'm actually a pure blood. I will always consider you as an equal. Tonks, your mother is a pureblood, she raised you, your father died when you were less than one. You've known about magic your whole life and you haven't had your father's muggle born thoughts on the wizarding world to influence you. As far as I'm concerned, you are a pure blooded witch. If you want, I will personally send a letter to the head of the house of Black asking for them to accept you back as a member. Just because your mother made a mistake and was booted out doesn't mean that you should have the same punishment placed on you." Harry said strongly.

Tonks couldn't help, but to let a smile cross her face. "Thanks Harry, but that's not necessary. As long as you won't think less of me, I couldn't give a damn what other people think."

"I'm glad." Harry said with a smile as they approached Tonks front door.

Tonks Residence, Surrey

Harry woke up the next morning to the sound of Tonks banging on his door yelling at him to wake up. Harry rolled over on his side to glance at the clock. 9:40 am. "Why is she waking me up so early?" Harry said in Parseltounge.

'I do not know, but if ssshe doessss it again.' Salazar hissed threateningly from the front of the bed.

'Relax my friend, you may go back to sssleep.' Harry said as he got up.

'I intended too.' Salazar hissed back as he buried his head into his coiled body.

Harry took a shower, which seemed to wake him up. He got dressed and walked downstairs where he found Tonks jumping up and down very excited with all her school books over the table.

“Harry! It’s wonderful. It’s great!” She exclaimed.

”Tonks slow down. What’s wonderful? What’s so great?” Harry asked.

”Oh I’m sorry. Here read.” Tonks said as she handed him a letter.

Harry took the letter from Tonks and began to read.

Dear Cousin Nymphadora (hehe can’t hurt me if I’m not there) and Harry,

Father recently found out some rather interesting news last night after you left. Apparently, a daft Muggle born witch tried to do several spells out of the first year book this summer and botched it up. Anyway the important thing is that the ministry didn’t detect the underage magic coming from her home. A local squib noticed that her parent’s eyebrows were charmed off and alerted the ministry. Father says this gives credence that they establish the underage magic charm on our wands at Hogwarts not when we buy the wands!

That means that Harry’s and my wands won’t give away any trace of underage magic till we reach Hogwarts. We can do magic for a month! Father has already started instructing me on some of the basic wand movements. I thought I should owl you immediately since cousin Nymphadora could use your wand to practice some of her second year spells while she teaches you the first year spells she has already learned, Harry!

Father said that you two are welcome to come by the manor whenever you would like this month and that he’ll give you a portkey at Gringotts later today.

Think how cool it would be if we show up to Hogwarts already able to do all the basic charms and transfiguration, Harry. We’ll probably be the top two students in our year because we’ll already know the basics. Cousin Tonks you could use Harry’s or my wand if you come

to the manor and you could get a head start and learn some curses to use on the twins! Anyway, I'll see you at Gringotts tomorrow at 1 pm.

Draco.

Harry set down the letter and his face split into a huge grin matching Tonks'. "So professor Tonks, what are my first instructions?" He asked curiously.

Tonks immediately launched into describing how to do the levitation charm, the stinging hex, and how to transfigure a match into a needle. Once Harry was certain that he remembered the movements he did his best to do the charm. Unfortunately, his feather barely moved, his stinging hex was closer to a tickling charm, and his match only managed to turn silver. Harry kept practicing the three simple first year spells until 11:40 when he handed his wand over to Tonks so that she could practice some second year charms and transfiguration.

Harry was shocked at how easily Tonks made transfiguration seem to be. Even with a wand that wasn't her own she managed to turn a bunch of matches into domino pieces after only twenty minutes worth of practice. Harry was really glad that Tonks would explain step by step how she did everything. Harry would take brief notes whenever Tonks would mention a tip that professor McGonagall or professor Flitwick would give.

At 12:58, Salazar finally seemed to wake up and make his way downstairs. He alerted Harry and Tonks that the portkey was building up its magic. Tonks gave Harry back his wand and Harry told Salazar to coil around his arm again. At 1 o'clock exactly, the portkey activated and Harry and Tonks felt a pull behind their naval before they landed with a thump.

Harry looked around and recognized the white marble atrium as being one for Gringotts. Harry helped Tonks up and they began looking for the Malfoys.

"Harry, Tonks!"

Harry and Tonks quickly turned around to see a smiling Draco Malfoy walking up to them his father and mother a step behind.

"Hello aunt Narcissia, uncle Lucius." Tonks said with a smile.

"Hello dear." Narcissia replied with a warm smile.

"So Harry are you ready?" Lucius asked.

"Er as ready as I'll ever be I guess." Harry replied.

"Harry, Tonks did you get my letter?" Draco asked.

"Oh yes we did. We've been having fun all morning." Tonks said with a wicked grin.

"Well I hope you two are being responsible." Narcissia said with a smile.

"Oh we are, Tonks was teaching me the levitation charm, the stinging hex, and some simple transfiguration earlier." Harry replied.

"Oh how did you manage it?" Lucius asked curiously.

"Er well my feather barely floated a few inches, and my stinging hex really didn't work well." Harry admitted sadly.

"Harry you actually managed to get a levitation charm to work the first morning that you tried it?" Lucius asked.

"Er kind of it would just float a few inches. Tonks said I needed more flick in my wand movement. When we are done with this, I hope to get back and try it again." Harry said.

"Well I'm impressed Harry, if I remember correctly Tonks, Flitwick takes over a week to describe the wand movements and incantation and still most students don't catch on as quickly as you have." Lucius said.

"Well Tonks is a great teacher. Even when she was working on her second year stuff, she would explain to me the theory and how it was supposed to work." Harry replied honestly making Tonks blush.

"I see. Well I hope that my lovely niece wouldn't mind showing Draco a thing or two some time over the last month." Lucius said with a smile.

Tonks was now beat red and could only nod her head at the praise everyone seemed to be giving her.

"Lucius you're embarrassing the poor dear." Narcissia chided.

"I'm sorry dear." Lucius said.

"So when are we going to be doing this test thing?" Harry asked trying to move the topic away from Tonks.

"Oh of course right this way, Rightaim has procured a ritual room for us to use." Lucius said.

Harry, Tonks, and Draco followed Mr. and Mrs. Malfoy across the atrium and down a corridor lit by several hundred floating torches. They proceeded down the hallway until they reached a plain brown doorway. The Goblin Mr. Malfoy said was Rightaim ran a finger down across the door and everyone heard a lock click before the door swung open.

The five humans walked behind the Goblin and Harry's first thought was that something must be wrong. The only thing inside the room was a large tub. The Goblin waved his hand and several torches came on at once. Harry began looking around the room and found that it was actually a lot bigger than he thought. Harry noticed that two of the four walls of the room were decorated with literally thousands of crests while the other two walls had thousands upon thousands of words scrawled across them. Harry saw that there were names under each of the crests and Harry squinted his eyes to see some of them. He read the names, North, Nott, Nottingham, and Novich before Mr. Malfoy called his name.

"Harry this room is very special. Those two walls," Mr. Malfoy gestured to the walls that had the crests, "have the crest of every pureblood wizarding family on it. The other two walls have the name of every known wizarding ability written on them. Now this ritual requires you to get into the sacred pool, and completely submerge yourself. The magic in the water will take care of the rest. Once you are out, the crests which you are heir too will light up. If you are a halfblood like most the world believes only the Potter crest should light up. If you are not, then another crest will light up. Do you understand?" Lucius asked.

"Yes sir, if I'm a halfblood, one will light up. If I'm actually a pureblood two will light up." Harry said.

"Good, now the abilities walls will also light up every ability that you should have. Now don't be discouraged if not a lot light up, Harry. Normally wizards undergo this ritual when they are seventeen and their magic has had a time to settle in better." Lucius said.

"Yes, sir I understand. At least I know I'll have two abilities right." Harry said causing everyone to laugh.

"Yes Harry. Now, we will leave the room. You will have to strip down and enter the tub. Rightaim will give you ok to submerge yourself and then the magic will take over understand?" Lucius asked.

Harry blushed when Lucius mentioned the getting naked part, but nodded in understanding.

After handing Salazar off to Tonks, and watching everyone depart, Harry disrobed himself and stepped into the ritual pool. Harry was somewhat shocked at how cold the water really was, but the longer he was in the water the more his body seemed to get use to it. Harry also discovered that while the ritual pool looked about the size of a normal bathtub, it was far deeper than one.

"Move to the center of the pool please." Rightaim said.

Harry literally swam over to the center of the pool and began treading water to stay afloat.

"Submerge yourself please." Rightaim said again.

Harry took a deep breath before diving underneath the water. The first thing Harry noticed was that the cold water was quickly warming up. I guess that's what Lucius meant by the magic will take over. The water though was continuing to warm up. After a good thirty seconds, the water was starting to get really hot. After forty seconds Harry decided that he had better get out of the tub. He swam towards the surface. Just as he was about to break the plane of the water though, his forehead struck something solid. Harry moved his hands along the solid structure that was keeping him in the water. Oh my God I'm trapped! Harry began to pound his fist against the solid surface which was keeping him in the ever increasingly hot ritual tub. At close to a minute underwater, Harry was doing everything he could not to panic; however, his lungs were seriously starting to burn from holding his breath.

Harry felt like screaming as the water started to burn his skin at seventy five seconds under water. I'm going to die! Holy Shit I'm actually going to die! I'm going to die in a stupid tub because I can't figure out how to get out!

At one hundred and five seconds under water, the pain and the lack of air finally got to much and Harry's eyes rolled to the back of his head, his mouth opened, and his remaining air left him as the burning water entered.

Ritual Recovery Room, Gringotts

"Mr. Potter!"

"Mr. Potter!"

Harry slowly opened his eyes and found himself lying on a cot in a dark room. "What happened?" Harry asked weakly.

"You completed the ritual." The Goblin said simply.

"I-I what?" Harry asked.

"The ritual Mr. Potter, you completed it." The Goblin repeated.

Slowly Harry felt his memories coming back. Harry remembered climbing into the ritual pool, the cold water turning hot and eventual boiling his skin, holding his breath till he couldn't any longer. "Why couldn't I get out of the pool?" Harry asked weakly.

"Because Mr. Potter, the Magic needed to enter every part of your body." The Goblin replied.

"I could have died!" Harry said trying to get up but failing.

"There are safeguards, Mr. Potter. Every heir to a pureblood magical family must do this." The goblin said.

"Oh." Harry replied. "Then Mr. Malfoy?"

"Did the same ritual many years ago." The Goblin said.

"He could have warned me." Harry said.

"He could have, but we would have been very angry at him. The first time someone does this ritual the water must see what will cause the wizard to give in, the pain of its heat or the lack of air. You Mr. Potter are one of a kind." The Goblin said.

"What do you mean?" Harry asked.

"Well giving into one or the other generally shows something about someone's character. You did not give into either you actually passed out before opening your mouth. You have a tremendous pain tolerance Mr. Potter and you are quite fearless." The Goblins said.

"Yes well I wasn't fearless when I realized I couldn't get out." Harry replied dryly.

"Yes well if you will please change back into your robes we will gather your guests and proceed back into the ritual room to see the results." The Goblin said.

Harry quickly dressed and followed the Goblin to where the Malfoys and Tonks were.

"So Harry how did you like it." Lucius asked when he saw him walking towards him.

"It was horrible beyond my imagination." Harry replied.

"Ha, that's exactly what father said you'd say." Draco said with a grin.

"Yes well that's because he probably thought the same thing right Mr. Malfoy." Harry said.

"Indeed Harry. Now shall we go take a look at what the ritual has brought?" Lucius said.

Rightaim led them back to the ritual room and opened the door.

The first thing that Harry noticed about the room was that the thousands of crests and words along the walls were gone. There were now only two gold glowing crests along one of the crest walls and two green glowing crest along the other.

"Lucius, he has four glowing crests!" Narcissia said in shock

"Merlin, you are a pureblood." Draco said in awe.

"Why are two of the crests glowing green?" Harry asked.

"Green is for magical heir." Rightfist said.

"What's the difference?" Harry asked curiously.

"A magical heir is much rarer then a hereditary heir. Normally a magical heir is named when the lord of a family has no children. It's a great honor to be selected a magical heir." Lucius said in awe.

"Well let's go see what you're heir to Harry!" Tonks said excitedly.

This seemed to snap everyone out of their daze. Harry approached the gold glowing crests first. The first crest was that of a great Winged Lion with a sword in its mouth. Harry was momentarily shocked when the large creature turned to look at him before bowing. Underneath the crest the name Potter was burning in golden writing.

"The second glowing crest was that of a shield. The shield had four logos drawn on it a rose, a dragon, a knight, and a wand. The Dragon and knight both bowed to Harry when he stood in front of them. The name Morgan burned underneath it.

"Get Merlin's ghost your heir to the house of Morgan!" Lucius screamed in shock.

Harry was not exactly sure what the house of Morgan was, but he was very uncomfortably with both Narcissia and Draco looked at Harry in what could only be considered awe.

"What's the house of Morgan?" Harry asked.

"Harry there are two main families that came from the house of Morgan La Fay. Morgan and Malfoy. Everyone thought that the Morgan line had died out years ago, but...but somehow Lily was of Morgan blood." Lucius said in shock.

"Are you sure it couldn't be from the Potter side?" Harry asked.

"100 percent sure. The Potters hailed from Wales. The Morgan's from France there is no way they could have mixed. Besides the Potters are an old family Harry, if they were related to Morgan La Fay they would have said so." Lucius said.

"Harry we'll figure out exactly how this occurred. Tap your wand to the crest and say, 'Ostendo sum meus Progenies.'" Narcissia said.

"What is Ostendo sum meus Progenies?" Harry asked.

"It's a standard lineage spell. These crests carry the family tree of all their heirs. It should show you the entire Morgan family line up till yourself." Lucius explained.

"Oh ok...er...Ostendo sum meus Progenies!" Harry said as he tapped his wand against the Morgan family crest.

The crest immediately dissolved and on the wall where the crest was a piece of parchment appeared. The name Morgan La Fay appeared at the top of a family tree. The line beneath it said, "Mark Morgan."

"Harry we know who started the family so place your wand on the top of the parchment and drag it down. The faster you drag your wand the faster it will travel to the bottom." Narcissia said.

Harry nodded his understanding and proceeded to drag his wand quickly down the parchment. The parchment began writing as though there was an invisible pen going a thousand miles and hour as name after name appeared on the parchment. After about five minutes and Draco getting bored to go look at the other crests, the words stopped and the name Harry James Potter appeared.

"Ok, now slowly raise your wand up a little Harry. Not fast at all we just want to see if Lily is a true pure blood or if the Morgan family intermarried with muggles." Lucius said.

Harry nodded and slowly dragged his wand up. The name Lily Samantha Rossier (Evans by adoption, Born July 23rd 1968, Died October 31st 1981) appeared directly over his name.

"Rossier, I don't believe it." Lucius said in shock.

"Is Rossier a pure blood family?" Harry asked.

"Yes Harry, the Rossier's were a very powerful and influential French family. During the war with the Dark lord Grindelwald, they're family was almost completely destroyed. They had to flee France to England. They had twins if I remember correctly. Samantha Rossier and Phillip Rossier. Phillip Rossier must have been Lily's true father." Lucius said in awe.

"But why did my mother need to be adopted!" Harry yelled.

"I-I don't know Harry look to see who your mother's parents were." Narcissa said.

Harry moved his wand up again and the names Phillip Rossier (Born July 10th 1932, Died July 23rd 1968) and Rachel Dumbledore (Born April 13th 1929, Died July 24th 1968) appeared on the next line.

"Dumbledore!" Lucius gasped. "Your grandmother was Albus Dumbledore's grand daughter!"

"Unbelievable." Narcissia said.

"So that means that...that, that Dumbledore guy must have known! He had to have known my mum was his great-great granddaughter why didn't he take her in! Why did he let her be adopted by my Aunt's family!" Harry spit.

"Harry he might not have known." Lucius said as he tried to absorb the information himself.

"It looks like your mother was born the same day as her father died, and her mother died the following day, maybe it was during child birth." Narcissia put forth.

"If she gave birth to your mother in a non magical area, it is possible that muggles placed your mother in an orphanage." Lucius said sadly.

Harry was silent for a while as he thought about all the new information.

"Harry are you ok?" Tonks asked carefully.

"No Tonks...I'm not alright. The only reason I've lived my life with those bastard Dursleys is because my Grandmother had my mother too close to some filthy muggle, who took her daughter to give to another muggle family." Harry said sharply.

Everyone was quite for some time, but Draco eventually broke the silence. "Ugh Mum, Dad, Harry, Tonks you'd better come and take a look at this." Draco called over to them.

Everyone turned their heads and saw that Draco was standing before the green glowing crests. Narcissia was the first to arrive by her son's side and instantly let out a gasp of shock, which was echoed by Lucius a moment later. Harry and Tonks walked up behind them and Harry looked at the crest on the left. Harry wasn't exactly sure what to make of the animal on the crest it was a mix between a skeleton and a winged horse. The creature looked at Harry and bowed down before him. Underneath the crest was the name BLACK burning in green flame.

"Hey I'm heir to the house of Black! Does that mean I can bring people back into the family?" Harry asked.

Harry's question fell on deaf ears though as no one seemed to be able to tear their eyes off the last green glowing crest. Harry walked up to view it and was instantly shocked to see a massive serpent with yellow eyes staring back at him. 'None are worthy!' The snake hissed menacingly at him.

'Who are you?' Harry hissed back.

The large snake's golden eyes seemed to grow wide. 'Ssspeaker? How do you ssspeak? You are not of my masterssss blood line?' The large serpent hissed.

'I do not know. I've always been able to ssspeak to ssserpentsss.' Harry responded.

'Are you pure of blood?' The serpent asked.

'I am.' Harry responded tentatively.

'Very well then young heir, I accept you.' The serpent said as it bowed down.

"He accepts me." Harry said in English.

"H-Harry, look at the name." Tonks squeaked out.

Underneath the now bowing Snake the name SLYTHERIN was burning with a bright green flame.

"I'm heir of Slytherin!" Harry gasped in shock.

"Magical heir." Lucius replied his eyes wide.

"I don't understand. Who was the last heir of Slytherin? How am I the magical heir? Why would he and the head of the Black family name me his magical heir?" Harry asked

"The last lord of the house of Black was your Godfather." Narcissia said.

"Oh." Harry said assuming that was meant he had past on.

"A-and the last lord of Slythern w-was, the dark lord." Lucius croaked weakly.

No one spoke after Lucius announcement; everyone just stared at the bowing green serpent, and the flaming green SLYTHERIN.

A/N Well there it is hope you liked it. Remember to be good readers and review!

Alright next chapter will be magical abilities, some training with Draco and Tonks, and a trip to Kings cross.

Chapter 5  
Gringotts, Diagon Alley

"S...so I'm the dark lord's heir?" Harry asked weakly.

That seemed to snap whatever compulsion everyone had been under.

"MERLIN!" Draco said in awe.

"Harry, no offense, but why would You-Know-Who name you his heir?" Tonks asked.

"That's a very good question." Lucius said absentmindedly.

"Well it certainly explains the parseltounge." Narcissia remarked.

Harry could only nod dumbly. He was really uncomfortable. He didn't like being the center of attention, and everyone was staring at him. He zoned out completely as Lucius and Narcissia began a conversation about the importance of this revelation. He found himself walked towards to the other side of the room.

"Harry?" Tonks asked as she ran over.

"Yea." Harry responded numbly.

"I...I Just wanted you to know that you're still the same person to me. I don't care that you're the dark lord's heir." Tonks said weakly.

Harry smiled slightly. "Good."

"Now let's go see what other cool talents you've got!" Tonks said practically bouncing up and down.

Harry nodded and they walked up to the other wall. There were several words that were glowing bright red. Harry immediately spotted Metamorphmagus and Parselmouth among them, but he also saw the words Animagus, Shadow Mage, Charms Gifted, and Transfiguration Gifted.

"What's an Animagus and a Shadow Mage?" Harry asked.

When he got no response he turned to look at Tonks who was staring at the wall in disbelief. "Tonks?" Harry asked.

"Oh I'm sorry Harry, but this is amazing!" She hissed so low it sounded like Parseltounge.

"What are they?" Harry asked getting impatient.

"Oh an Animagus means you have the ability to take on the form of an Animal. It's so cool there is a teacher at Hogwarts that's one! She can turn into a cat! I've never heard of a Shadow Mage. The only Mages I've ever heard about were Fire, Earth, Air, and Water Mages. They are typically called elementals." Tonks said in awe.

"But never a Shadow Mage?" Harry asked again.

"No never! We have to pick up some books Harry this is just too...too..."

"Bloody Hell, Harry!" Draco screamed.

Harry immediately turned to see Draco, his eyes wide with disbelief.

"Any clue what a Shadow Mage is Draco? Tonks has only heard of Elemental Mages." Harry said.

"FATHER! FATHER COME HERE QUICK!" Draco yelled.

"What is it?" Lucius said running over Narcissia right at his heels.

"Father look!" Draco said pointing his finger at the list of talents and abilities.

"Great Merlin!" Lucius said as he read the list.

"Lucius, do you know what a Shadow Mage is? Tonks has never heard of them." Harry asked.

"I...I've heard them mentioned in passing in a few books on mages, but no I don't really know any talent that's associated with them. Nor have I really researched the subject." Lucius said.

"Harry that's an incredibly impressive list of skills, what's more amazing is that your magic isn't even matured yet." Narcissia said.

"What do you mean you mentioned that on my birthday as well." Harry said.

"Oh, well we weren't expecting to find any real talent besides the one's you've already displayed Harry. You have to understand you are very young. When your magic matures I wouldn't be surprised if several more abilities appear." Narcissia said.

"Wow." Harry said dumbly.

"I can't believe you are Charms and Transfiguration gifted." Lucius said in awe.

"Why? I just assumed that meant I would be good at them. Doesn't it?" Harry asked.

"Harry...ok let me explain this too you in terms of a scale. Normal witches and Wizards are all relatively close to one another when they first start to learn aspects of magic such as Charms, Potions, or Transfiguration. Above that first level of standard witches and wizards though are a small group that show a slight inclination towards a field of magic. These people would be called say charms talented or potions talented. They have a natural affinity for a specific field of magic, but they can't quite explain it and unless they are tested they would probably never know you have it. Draco's Godfather is Potions talented, so he had a natural love of the subject as well as being naturally better than most at it. Above those people are an extremely rare group of witches and wizards who are gifted to a field of magic. They have such a raw talent for a specific type of magic that they often don't even need to practice it, they can just look at a spell and perform it. That's what you are Harry. The only thing that is rarer is to be called a protégé. Protégés sometimes don't even need to use a spell to do their field of magic. They are essentially born at the level

of master. Your mother was a charms protégé. She was the first protégé in over a hundred years. The last was a potions protégé who completely redefined the field.” Lucius said.

“So I’m gifted in both Charms and Transfiguration.” Harry said in awe.

”Yes, if I had to guess, I’d say you got a large chunk of your mothers talent for Charms and your father was most likely gifted in Transfiguration. I remember someone once telling me that he was one of Minerva McGonagall’s greatest students.” Narcissia said.

“Minerva McGonagall? Why does that name sound familiar?” Harry asked.

”It was on your Hogwarts letter. She’s the deputy headmistress and the Transfiguration teacher. She’s also the Animagus I was telling you about.” Tonks said

“Oh...so wait does this mean I won’t even have to study in those classes?” Harry asked

“Absolutely not! If anything you should study harder in those classes!” Narcissia said strongly.

Harry backed up slightly clearly wondering how he angered the woman.

”I’m sorry Harry, but you have no idea how frustrating it was for me even to pass charms. Being gifted doesn’t mean that you can just blow off the class; you will just be able to perform the practical aspect better and faster then most. You will still need to learn the theory in order to do the more complex magic, but that too should come easy to you. If you study really hard, you could probably get a mastery in both Charms and Transfiguration while you are still in Hogwarts.” Narcissia said.

“Well at least that explains how you could cast the levitation spell on your first attempt.” Draco said.

”Er...well yea I guess it does.” Harry said sheepishly.

"Excuse me, but the Smith family has scheduled this room for two o'clock and we need to revert it back to its original state." A goblin said from the door.

"Well I guess we had better get going." Lucius said.

Together, the group walked out of the room and the bank. Once they were outside, Lucius tapped Harry and Tonks' portkey. "Alright when you are ready to leave say activate."

"Yes sir." They said together.

"Harry I will speak with my rare book dealer and see if he can find anything that covers Shadow Mages. If he can, I will send it too you." Lucius said.

"Thank you sir, I'll repay whatever the cost of any book you find." Harry said.

"That's not necessary Harry, but thank you none the less." Lucius said with a grin.

"Oh Harry we really have to get home, mum said she might stop by for lunch!" Tonks said.

"Ok well I guess this is goodbye for now." Harry said.

"Cousin Tonks, Harry, don't be a stranger. Father gave you that portkey to the manor if you ever want to practice spells. Father said we could use his target range to practice offensive stuff, and we can search the grounds for mice to practice transfiguration!" Draco called to them.

"Well definitely stop by, Draco. Don't worry about that!" Tonks said pleasantly before grabbing Harry and saying, "Activate!"

A second later, Harry felt the pull behind his naval and a moment later they appeared in Tonks' kitchen.

Tonks Residence, Surry

The next few weeks passed by in a blur of spells for Harry. Tonks seemed to think being Charms and Transfiguration gifted seemed to mean that he should read every book in the Malfoy family library about the subject. Harry surprisingly though didn't have any problem with this. He found both subjects completely fascinating. Once he found out that he was gifted in those fields of magic, he had an incredible confidence in his ability to do them. He mastered the levitation charm when he got back from Gringotts, and he quickly read through the first year charms book. Lucius was right when he said that he often only needed to look at the spell and wand movement to achieve the desired result. He found transfiguration slightly harder than charms, but he still was able to do the spells perfectly after a few tries.

Lucius was incredibly receptive of their practicing spells at the manor, and he even provided a list of spells that they should try to learn. Harry found that while he wasn't gifted in offensive spell work, he still caught on incredibly quickly. Tonks and Draco seemed to catch on just as quick and the three of them soon compiled a very impressive list of spells that they could do. The spells included the summoning charm, accio, the water charm, Aguamenti, the unlocking spell, Alohomora, the locking charm, Colloportus, the disarming charm, Expelliarmus, the freezing charm, Freezus the fire spell, Incendio, the impediment jinx, Impedimenta, the stinging hex, and the counter spell, Finite.

Tonks already knew some of the spells that they set out to learn, but some of them such as the summoning charm and the disarming charm were new for her as well. The three of them also practiced dueling and while they were limited to what they could do, they still had a good time. Tonks established herself as a feared duelist when she hit Draco with a stinging hex to the bits for calling her Nymphadora. While he was still on the ground writhing in pain, she walked over to him and kindly told him that if he ever got the urge to call her that at school to remember that she was currently using Harry's wand. Draco hadn't made the mistake of calling her Nymphadora or any variation of it ever since.

The only down side about their training was that they couldn't stay very long at Malfoy Manor. Narcissia said that they should probably hold off telling Mrs. Tonks about their relationship until later. Harry could see that it was hard on Tonks, but he agreed with Narcissia. He had broached the subject of her family once with Mrs. Tonks and she had quickly changed the subject. So they had to do their training while she was at work. They also could never have lunch at Malfoy Manor just in case Mrs. Tonks decided to ever stop by for lunch. During the weekend, they would just read their school books and practice spells in their room.

So Harry was surprised to say the least when Draco's Eagle owl showed up on Saturday with a letter that demanded that he come to the manor with Tonks.

"What do you think?" Harry asked.

"Well I guess we could tell mum we are going into town today." Tonks replied with a shrug.

Harry and Tonks quickly ran down stairs and found Mrs. Tonks sitting at the kitchen table drinking coffee.

"Wotcher mum!" Tonks said with a smile.

"Hello dears, what are you two up too today?" Mrs. Tonks asked.

"Well we were thinking about going shopping in town today." Tonks said very excited.

"Oh Harry you didn't agree to that did you?" Mrs. Tonks said with smile.

"Er well yes why?" Harry asked.

"Ha, well dear my little Nymphadora loves to shop, and she's a little demon when she's in a clothing store." Mrs. Tonks said with a smile.

MUUUM!" Tonks said.

"Well dear it's true. It's not her fault really, Harry. She just likes to see what different outfits will look like with different hairdos. I figure I'll see you back here an hour after the last shop is closed." Mrs. Tonks said with a grin.

"Mum that's not fair! It's not my fault that different shirts look better with different hair colors!" Tonks pouted.

Harry couldn't help but to laugh very hard at Tonks' pout.

"Careful Potter!" Tonks growled.

"Easy, Tonks. I'm sure you're not that bad." Harry said with a smile.

"Well I guess you've got to learn sometime, dear. Better you than me after all. I'll see you back here at around 8 pm I suspect." Mrs. Tonks said with a wide grin.

Tonks just huffed indignantly and pulled Harry out of the house. When they were in the Alley, Tonks took out the portkey Mr. Malfoy had given them and a second later they were taken to Malfoy Manor. Malfoy Manor, Unplotable

Harry and Tonks crashed on top of each other upon entering the manor. "Ugh! Why can we land normally everywhere else, but we always crash when we enter the Manor!" Harry yelled in frustration.

"Simple Harry, the wards cause you to crash." Lucius said striding into the room.

"Oh." Harry said dumbly rubbing his head.

"How long are you two going to be able to stay?" Draco asked coming into the room.

"Oh well Tonks told her mum that we were going shopping." Harry said with a smile.

"Oh so like a few hours?" Draco said.

"Er well longer then that." Harry said with a smile.

"It takes you longer then a few hours to shop." Draco said with his mouth hanging open.

"Draco, I think your cousin takes after your mother when she shops." Lucius said with a grin.

"And what pray tell is wrong with the way I shop!" Narcissia said entering the room.

"Er well nothing dear, but you can...er well that is to say you take a long time." Lucius said hesitantly.

"Well it's not my fault that different outfits look better with different hairdos and colors!" Narcissia said pointedly.

"Thank you!" Tonks exclaimed.

Narcissia shot a smile at to Tonks, and all the males in the room let out a breath they didn't know they were holding. Over the last month, Harry quickly found that both Tonks and Narcissia seemed to have a fierce temper whenever they were defending some aspect of their metamorphmagus skill.

"So Lucius, why are we here?" Harry asked trying to change the subject.

"Oh yes. I located a man who claims to have some knowledge of Shadow Mages." Lucius said with a grin.

Harry could barely keep his excitement in check. "Are you serious is he coming here? When can I meet him? How much did the meeting cost you? I'll pay you back whatever it was!" Harry said excitedly.

"Relax Harry, please. First of all, we have to meet him in Knockturn Alley. He owns a shop that sells jewelry. At least that's the stores public face. In reality, he sells cursed objects. We have to meet him in thirty minutes. He will be closing his store for lunch. As for the cost,

do not worry about it. An acquaintance set up the meeting as a favor for a bill I convinced Minister Fudge to sign.” Lucius said.

”Will Tonks and Draco be able to come?” Harry asked.

Lucius looked pensive for a moment. “Well Tonks if you can change your appearance and height to make yourself appear more intimidating then yes you can come. I’m sorry Draco, but until you have a better grasp of magic I don’t want you coming. Your cousin and Harry can make themselves appear more intimidating with their Metamorphmagus skill.” Lucius said.

“I understand father.” Draco said halfheartedly.

”Don’t worry, Draco. Whatever we find out you’ll be the first to know.” Harry said with a smile.

That seemed to cheer Draco up a bit and he nodded.

”Well you two are going to need some cloaks to cover your face. Regardless of your metamorphmagus skills, you don’t want people to know who you are down in Knockturn Alley.” Narcissia said.

Harry and Tonks both nodded in understanding. A few moments later Narcissia arrived with two black hooded cloaks. Harry put on the cloak and turned to face Tonks, but he was unprepared to see a look of pure terror on her face.

”Tonks what’s wrong?” Harry asked.

Tonks’ eyes just grew wider and she started to stammer, “H...Ha...Harry lo...look at y...you....yourself.”

Harry turned to the Malfoys and all three of them instinctively took a step back from him.

”What is it?” Harry demanded.

Lucius drew his wand and conjured a large mirror. Harry looked into the mirror and let out a gasp of his own. Where his face should have

been under the cloak there was only blackness. In fact, the only thing that even showed that there was a head under the cloak were a pair of bright green glowing eyes.

"Merlin, I don't think Harry is going to have any trouble being left alone in Knockturn Alley, father." Draco said.

"Is the cloak charmed Lucius?" Narcissia asked hesitantly.

"No, Harry is performing some form of magic. I just don't know what it is." Lucius said almost in awe.

"Your terrifying, Harry." Tonks said with a smirk.

Harry caught the playful tone Tonks was using and he turned to face her. He used his metamorphmagus skill to let his body mass expand slightly and to grow a few inches. When he reached 5 foot 7, he stopped and strode towards Tonks, who looked like she was trying to stop herself from screaming in fear.

Harry walked right up to her and leaned in so that her face was just inches from his own. He smirked as he narrowed his eyes and said, "Boo!"

Tonks let out a quick shriek, but then started to laugh uncontrollably. "THAT'S NOT FUNNY!" She said as she hit him in the chest.

Harry for his part could only laugh. "I thought it was hilarious, Tonks."

"Tonks you should really put your own cloak on, or you will be late." Narcissia said noticing the time.

Tonks quickly put on her own cloak and let her own body mass expand and she shot up to around 5 foot 5. Lucius placed an obscuring spell on her hood so that no one could see inside. Then the three of them took the portkey and were taken from the manor. Alley behind the Leaky Cauldron, London

Tonks, Harry, and Lucius landed just behind the Leaky Cauldron, and the three hooded figures entered the pub. As soon as they were

inside, people began to take notice of them. Harry saw several patrons reach down their robes as if expecting a fight. Lucius paid them no mind and they strode to the back of the pub where they opened the gate the Diagon Alley. The three of them quickly entered the Alley and made their way towards Knockturn Alley.

Harry noticed that unlike Diagon Alley, Knockturn Alley was not at all well lit. Several hooded woman began to approach them and Harry saw Lucius draw his wand. Harry just turned his head to the three approaching woman and his eyes burned bright green. The woman instantly stopped their approach and went back to where they were sitting. Harry heard Tonks exhale in relief while Lucius just chuckled.

"That's a useful talent, Harry." Lucius said as they continued walking down the alley.

Harry grinned, but didn't replay as he was doing his best to appear as menacing as possible. It was clearly working as every patron seemed to be avoiding their group at all cost. After a ten minute walk, they stopped in front of a store that said Sven's Wizarding Jewelry.

Lucius pushed the door open and Harry and Tonks quickly followed.

"Welcome." The man behind the counter said hesitantly.

Lucius tossed back his hood and the man let out a breath. "Oh Mr. Malfoy, you're a few minutes early. Michael told me five till two if you'll give me a few moments to close the shop." The man said.

"Of course Jonas." Lucius replied candidly.

The man quickly ducked behind the counter and while he was occupied Lucius turned to Harry and Tonks. "Keep your hoods over your faces." He said strictly.

"Yes sir," They said together.

"Ah Mr. Malfoy if you and your guests will follow me. I'll take you to Sven." The man named Jonas said.

Lucius started to follow him and Harry and Tonks followed. The man stopped in front of a picture of an ugly woman wearing a large ruby. He tapped the ruby with his wand and said, "Business is Golden." The portrait swung forward exposing a large room lit by torches. Jonas beckoned them forward and the three of them stepped through. Once they were inside the portrait closed. Harry was about to say something when the voice of an older man came from across the room.

"Lucius Malfoy, our mutual friend says you've been asking about Shadow Mages?"

"Yes." Lucius replied.

"Then take a seat. By providing you with this information, I will be absolving the debt I owe to our mutual friend."

"Thank you Sven." Lucius said.

The man named Sven chuckled. "No thanks are necessary, Lucius. I adore speaking of my passion. I would have provided the information freely. Well maybe not freely, but speaking of my passion is a lot nicer way to fulfill my debt than what I was expecting." Sven said.

Harry took a seat next to Lucius and instantly Sven's attention shifted to him. Harry felt the man's eyes burrowing into his own, Harry flared his green eyes and the man instantly recoiled as if being struck.

"Merlin's Ghost! Lucius! H...he's a Shadow Mage. A real Shadow Mage!" Sven said in shock.

"We are aware of that. What we are not aware of is what that entails. Much to my surprise my rare book finder and contact at the ministry were unable to find any information about them." Lucius said.

"Yes well they wouldn't as there hasn't been a real Shadow Mage in the last nine hundred years." Sven said in awe.

"Why? I knew Mages were rare, but they appear far more often than that. The dark lord if I remember employed a water mage for a brief period." Lucius said.

"Yes well there is a fundamental difference between Shadow Mages and Elemental Mages. You see many people are born with the talent to become Shadow Mages, but due to Ministry decrees on Child Abuse and the universal laws of prisoner treatment put into place by the council of sorcerers in 1283 there haven't been any born." Sven said.

"Child Abuse? Prisoner treatment? What do you mean?" Lucius said almost alarmed.

"Well for a wizard or witch to express ability in the Shadow Arts, they are usually confined to a dungeon or a torture chamber from birth. The child would have to be literally surrounded by darkness for most of his life. Only people who exist in the shadows completely isolated from others can achieve the necessary bonding with the shadows. Shadow Mages were first discovered in torture cells during the reign of the Pharos in Egypt. The legend said that if a child had a talent for the Shadow Arts, was confined to the shadows against his will, and was hurt severely. That the shadows would reach out and comfort him. They would send him companions. Most of these include creatures that inhabit darkness such as flies, roaches..."

"Spiders." Harry said weakly.

"Yes," Sven said sadly, "Spiders would be a companion. They say that if the child treated his companions well then the Shadows would judge him worthy to wield the powers of darkness to escape his or her torment." Sven stopped speaking here and turned to Harry. "I'm sorry. Whatever you went through must have been horrible."

Harry just stared back at the man enraged that he had spoken so airily about his abuse, but a part of him noted that the man was right. He had lived a horrible existence for a decade in his cupboard under the stairs with only Spiders to keep him company. Harry noticed both Lucius and Tonks were now both looking at him and he could almost smell the pity coming off them.

"Continue! What are the talents of a Shadow Mage!" Harry barked to Sven.

"Ah well you've already seemed to tap into one. What you are doing now with your cloak is called blending. Shadow Mages have the ability to completely disappear into the Shadows. You want people to see your eyes I take it or else they would be blending in as well. Another talent a Shadow Mage has is to Shadow Travel. Shadow Mages can disappear into the shadows and can move hundreds if not thousands of miles in an instant. As long as a shadow touches the land the Shadow Mage can travel there. From what I understand it, the Mage blends into a shadow and...er...well he or she then disappears into the Shadow and well I guess I can't explain it you just move to wherever a shadow touches. It's an amazing talent." Sven said.

"So he moves similar to a Lethifold?" Lucius asked.

"Shadow Mages control Lethifolds. The reason they are so rare in England is because one of the last Shadow Mages called them all forth to attack a rival in tropical Indonesia. He was defeated and the Lethifolds have not migrated back." Sven said with a grin.

"He can control Lethifold!" Tonks gasped before she could stop herself.

"Yes young miss...well at least once he's trained up a bit. The main difference between the way a Shadow Mage and a Lethifold travels though, Lucius, is that a Shadow Mage can move as far as there are Shadows instantly. Lethifolds can not move that far or fast." Sven said.

"How do you know so much about Shadow Mages?" Harry asked darkly.

Sven actually laughed here and took a small book out of his pocket. "This is the personal journal of Marcus De Roché my distant ancestor and the last Shadow Mage. His mother was captured during a Goblin Rebellion. She was eight months pregnant and he was born in a

Goblin prison. He lived in the prison for the first seven years of his life. Then on his eighth birthday his powers manifested and he broke out all the prisoners and killed all the Goblins. Since that little incident, the Goblin nation no longer takes prisoners during a war.” Sven said.

Harry eyed the journal hungrily, and much to his surprise Sven placed it on the table and pushed it over to him. “I believe you will need this more than I.” Sven said.

”Harry’s green eyes must have shown his disbelief because Sven smiled and said, “Take it young man. I am old and can learn very little if anything from the pages. You can benefit far more from the journal of my ancestor.”

”Thank you.” Harry said as he took the journal.

”Well, I believe that concludes our business then.” Lucius said hesitantly.

”I believe it does. Thank you Lucius, I never would have believed that I would ever have the opportunity to impart my knowledge to an actual Shadow Mage.” Sven said.

The portrait opened behind them letting a great deal of light into the room and Harry, Tonks, and Lucius left.

”Harry...”Tonks said.

”No, not here!” Harry barked.

Lucius seemed to understand and he offered them the Quill portkey. Harry grasped and a moment later the three of them were taken back to Malfoy Manor.

Malfoy Manor, Unplotable

Harry appeared in Malfoy Manor and he miraculously didn’t fall to the ground this time.

”Hey Harry! I convinced mum to key you and Tonks into the wards so you don’t fall on your face.” Draco said with a grin.

Harry just ignored him and took a seat on the couch and put his face in his hands. I don't want to have this discussion! Why did that bastard have to bring it up! Now they're all going to think I'm weak. I'm never going to let anyone hurt me ever again! And when I'm stronger I will punish the Dursley's! I wonder what a Lithifold is? From Tonks' reaction they must be nasty maybe I'll sick a few on the Dursleys. Yea that'd be ironic hurt them with the talent they helped create!

"Harry..." Tonks said hesitantly.

"What!" Harry barked.

"Harry do you want to talk about it?" Tonks asked ignoring his harsh tone.

"Talk about what? What happened? Did you find anything out? What did they tell you?" Draco asked quickly.

"Draco be quite!" Lucius said strongly in a tone that said no arguments.

Draco fell silent and only then noticed the look of absolute anguish his friend seemed to be in.

"Harry please. You have to tell someone. Dumbledore wants to send you back to...to those people. Mum already said so." Tonks said tears welling up in her eyes.

"Good." Harry said darkly.

"Harry..."

"NO! I WANT TO GO BACK! I WILL SHOW THEM EXACTLY WHO THEY MESSED WITH TONK! ....ME!" Harry said the malice dripping off every word.

'You sssseek vengeance, massster?' Salazar hissed.

"Yesss. I will hurt my relativessss. I will make them wisssh for death." Harry hissed.

'Then I will help you. I will tear their flesssssh apart!' Salazar hissed darkly.

'Thank you my friend, but we will have time for our vengeance. After I tell the rabbitsss what they did to me, they will want to harm them. I can not let thissss happen. My relativessss will be mine.' Harry hissed back.

'Then don't tell the rabbitsss.' Salazar hissed.

'I'm afraid it's not that easssy my friend.' Harry hissed sadly.

"Very well, Harry, tell them if they take your kill. I will bite them." Salazar hissed seriously.

Harry actually laughed out loud at that. 'I will tell them friend. Thank you.'

"Harry, what is it?" Narcissia said.

"Before I tell you anything. I want to make it known that Salazar will bite anyone who tries to hurt the Dursleys. They are mine to deal with, no one else. Is that clear?" Harry said with strength he didn't know he had.

"Oh...ok Harry." Tonks said hesitantly.

"Agreed." Lucius said.

"Alright." Draco replied.

Narcissia hesitated for a second, but ultimately agreed as well.

"Well to answer you question Draco. He answered all my questions, and more. He explained that there hadn't been a Shadow Mage in the last nine hundred years. He said something about Ministry doctrines on Chlid Abuse stopping them from appearing." Harry said.

He let his words sink and a second later Draco roared, "WHAT! YOU MEAN! YOU...YOU WERE..."

"YES! Ok...yes the great Harry Potter was beaten ever day he could remember by his relatives. He was then forced to live in the cupboard under the stairs where his only friends were spiders!" Harry yelled in anguish. Then to everyone's shock he started to laugh uncontrollably and didn't stop.

"H-Harry are you alright?" Tonks asked now truly scared.

"Oh...Oh yes Tonks." Harry said as tears started to fall down his face. It made an odd sight seeing a boy laughing hysterically with tears blanketing his face. "Oh the Irony!" Harry eventually cried out.

"Harry...mate...er are you sure you're ok?" Draco asked hesitantly.

"Oh I'm better then ok Draco! I'm...I'm going to kill those bastards with the very gift they forced upon me!" Harry said as he broke down into a fit of laughter and tears.

Narcissia suddenly swooped down and pulled him into a hug. "Shh. It's ok Harry. Just let it out." She said soothingly.

Harry's laughter slowly stopped till only the sound of soft whimpers echoed through the manor.

"Thank you, Narcissia. I needed that." Harry said

"Tonks, did you know about this?" Lucius asked icily. Child abuse was something he did not tolerate, yes he had killed children for the dark lord, but they were casualties of war. The thought of Harry Potter being abused by his MUGGLE relatives infuriated him almost beyond rational thought.

"W...well...yes, but not to that extent, uncle Lucius. My mum and I found him beaten up in the woods, but kids did that. Later we took him home, and we heard his uncle hitting him. That's when we decided to get him out of the house. He looked horrible....Harry he

did that to you every day.” She said as her own tears started to fall down her face.

“Yes. He always found a reason to hate me. I remember my first report card from primary school. I had better grades than my cousin and my uncle beat me for over two hours for cheating. I eventually passed out and woke up in my cupboard. I was kept there for four days without food. When he finally let me out and I went back to school, I found out that I got zeros on all my tests that week because my uncle said I ran away.” Harry said.

“I need to speak to these muggles.” Lucius said as he rose to leave; however Salazar quickly shot off of Harry’s shoulder and landed directly in front of him hissing menacingly.

“He says the vengeance will be mine and mine alone. I have to agree with him, Lucius.” Harry said darkly.

“Harry you will only have a first year education next summer.” Lucius stated.

“Lucius, what are Lethifolds?” Harry asked darkly.

Everyone in the room grew quite. Harry saw understanding cross Lucius and Tonks’ faces.

“Ah, well they are creatures that inhabit the shadows. They can force someone to undergo their worst memories. That’s how they capture their pray. When the memories get too strong and the person passes out they...well they eat them whole.” Lucius said with a shudder.

“Well I think that it will be a fitting punishment if I lock my relatives into my cupboard with a few of those, don’t you.” Harry said menacingly.

“Harry, it’s a great idea mate, but Lethifolds are really rare. They exist only in the tropics pretty much.” Draco said.

“Shadow Mages control Lethifolds, Draco.” Harry said plainly.

Narcissia and Draco's mouths both dropped at this revelation. "Merlin." They said together.

"So Lucius, you will leave my relatives to me. Please." Harry said.

Lucius eyed the venomous asp before him. "Very well, Harry." Lucius said softly. "After you deal with your relatives, you are of course welcome to stay at the manor with us."

"I appreciate that." Harry said with a grin.

Harry spent the next few hours explaining all that he had been told about Shadow Mages to Draco and Narcissia. At seven thirty, Harry and Tonks decided that it would be best if they went home, and they portkeyed back to the Alley behind her house.

"I'm sorry that you had to go through that, Harry. I understand why you hate muggles now." Tonks said weakly.

"Thank you Tonks." Harry replied weakly. The day's events had taken quite the toll on him.

"Harry?" Tonks asked.

"Yes." Harry replied.

"When you take care of your relatives...can...can I be there with you?" Tonks asked.

"Why?" Harry asked.

"Because what they did too you... it...it's horrible and you are my best friend, my first friend, and I wouldn't have even met Draco, aunt Narcissia, and uncle Lucius without you. I want to hurt them with you!" Tonks said.

"You won't try to stop me?" Harry asked.

"No." Tonks replied firmly.

"Then yes, you can be there with me when I say goodbye to them."  
Harry said.

"Thank you." Tonks said as she opened her front door.

"Oh you two are back already? Nymphadora are you losing your touch?" Mrs. Tonks asked.

"No mum, I really just didn't find anything I liked." Tonks said as she sat down.

A/N Well here it is I hope you all like it a lot! I intended to post the next chapter of Rise of Darkness today, but it's still with my BETA so I hope this will be some sort of consolation. Hopefully I'll be able to get chapter sixteen of Rise of Darkness out to you very soon. NOW REMEMBER TO REVIEW

A/N: I would like to address a claim of Plagiarism against my story made by an anonymous reviewer who goes by the name of Redhand. First, let me say that I have not in any way plagiarized Regulus' 'The Philosopher's Stone Retransmuted.' In fact, the only similarity I am even aware of between the two stories is that Tonks is in Harry's age group. The story that influenced me more than any other was in fact 'The New Marauders' by Lopie. In that story, Tonks uses her metamorphmagus talent to take on the form of a sixteen year old girl to go to Hogwarts with Harry at Dumbledore's request. I got to wondering what would Tonks have been like if she went to school with Harry if she was his age for real. Well low and behold the premise for this fiction was created. I do not mind people flaming my story, I have given a few flames out myself, but PLEASE DO NOT EVER accuse me of plagiarism. I am a fan of fanfiction so naturally some ideas might come from what I read, but I would never intentionally steal someone's original idea only to resubmit it as my own. And just as a final note too Redhand, I have no intention of withdrawing my story and just so you know I have not even read the Regulus series. Now I hope everyone enjoys chapter 6 of Dark Lord Potter, and please no more flames accusing me of something as ludicrous as plagiarism.

## DARK LORD POTTER

### Chapter 6

Harry woke up on the morning of September the first slightly nervous. I'm going to Hogwarts today. I'm actually going to a school for magic. Harry thought. As much magic as he had been around magic in the last few months, the idea was still daunting to him.

The final week of summer had been very exciting for Harry. He spent most of the time reading the journal of the last Shadow Mage, Marcus De Roché. The man was either a genius or a certifiable nut job. Half his journal contained dark spells that only someone who was a Shadow Mage could perform. They were incredibly complex and Harry found that he wasn't able to even come close to performing one. Once he realized that the spells were far above his level of magic, he read over the notes about the abilities of a Shadow Mage.

He practiced each his Shadow Mage abilities every night, and he was very happy that just like Parseltounge and being a Metamorphmagus it was almost second nature for him. He could now blend into the Shadows to become completely invisible. Shadow Travel was much harder though, and he had only tried it to move about his own room. He had had a slight accident the first time he tried to do it courtesy of Tonks.

::Flashback::

Harry walked around his room and turned off every light. It was ten o'clock in the evening and the only light was coming in through his window. He walked over to the corner of his room and focused on disappearing. He felt the now familiar tingle in his body as he blended into the shadows. When he opened his eyes to look at himself, he had completely merged with the Shadows.

He closed his eyes and focused on moving. It was a lot harder then it sounded. When someone blends into the shadows to shadow travel, you lose your physical body. According to Roché, you had to think of yourself as a shadow capable of thought. You had to literally imagine moving like a Shadow.

That was the aspect that gave Harry fits. How does a shadow move? He eventually thought of himself as a giant black cloud that would float across the wall.

As soon as Harry managed to visualize himself as the cloud, the room lit up in shades of black and grey. Harry took a moment to fully take in the sight. It was odd. He knew that his eyes were closed, yet he could still see, and what a sight it was. Harry saw thousands of little lines connecting every shadow, and he could feel a pull from each of them. He followed one of the lines directly up the wall. He was amazed that his vision didn't seem to be limited to what was in front of him. While he was climbing the wall, he could still see the ceiling, the floor, the wall he was climbing, and the rest of the room.

Harry slowly got the hang of following the different interconnecting lines of shadows and was soon racing all over the room. It was unlike anything he had ever experienced. He was completely free. One

second he was traveling across one of the walls and the next second he was racing across the floor. When he traveled underneath the bed his senses exploded. The thousand of lines blurred and he found that in total darkness the lines were so packed together that he couldn't distinguish one from another. He raced out from underneath the bed just as the door opened.

He watched as Tonks gasped from the doorway. He wasn't sure exactly what he looked like when he traveled in the shadows, but it must have been interesting. He raced up the wall and onto the ceiling. He was directly over the light when Tonks flicked the light switch. Harry screamed as the light turned on just inches from his face, or what he thought would have been his face. He tried to follow one of the shadow lines back to the corner, but the light caught up with the line he was following and it disappeared. The moment the line he was traveling disappeared, Harry felt himself being ripped out of his shadow form. He fell to the ground, struck the bed, bounced once, and fell onto the floor.

"Ohhhh! Tonks why did you turn the light on?" Harry said.

"Oh Merlin! I'm so sorry Harry. I just freaked out. I saw this big black thing race across your bed and I panicked. Was that you? It was wasn't it! You were shadow traveling! What's it like?" Tonks asked.

"Well it's wonderful provided you don't run out of shadows to follow." Harry said as he rubbed his head.

"What happened when the light came on? What's it like?" Tonks asked again.

"Well first it's like seeing everything, and I mean everything. I saw the entire room in different shades of gray. There were these thousands of little lines connecting everything and I just sort of knew I could follow them. It's amazing it feels like your flying except nothing physical can hurt you. When you turned the light on, it felt like my entire body was aching. I found one of the few remaining shadow lines and I tried to follow it, but the light caught up to me. When the light caught up to the line I was following, it disappeared and I fell to the ground." Harry said.

"Harry, do you mean to tell me you were trying too out run the light once I turned it on?" Tonks said in awe.

"Yea. So what?" Harry said.

"Harry, look how quickly this room lights up." Tonks said as she quickly turned off the light and then turned it back on again.

"See the room lights up almost instantaneously. You would have to be traveling at an incredibly speed even to attempt to out run the light." Tonks said.

"Wow. I guess I didn't even realize how fast I was traveling." Harry said with a grin.

::End Flashback::

The only aspect of his talent as a Shadow Mage that Harry hadn't tried to use yet was his ability to call forth Lethifolds. Mr. Malfoy had expressly forbidden him from even attempting to use that talent unless he was there to perform the patronus charm just incase the Lethifold rebelled.

De Roché's journal described the calling forth of Lethifolds as almost an orgasmic experience. He claimed that as a Shadow Mage sunk so far into the Shadows to call forth a Lethifold that the Mage's very mind and magic intermixed with the shadows. This was just one of several interesting comments that De Roché made in his journal.

"Harry get up, get up, get up!" Tonks said as she banged on his door.

'Ssssalazar are you ready?' Harry asked.

'I am not pleasssed with getting up so early, Harry.' Salazar hissed his voice laced with annoyance.

'It's only this one time. I'm sure you'll be able to ssssleep on the train.' Harry hissed.

'I will get no ssssleep on the train. It will be loud and the rabbit will be there. I mussst ssscare him.' Salazar hissed.

'Why do you torture Draco?' Harry asked.

'He issss sssso easssily frightened, Massster. I find it rather humoroussss.' Salazar hissed.

Harry just shook his head. If snakes could laugh he figured Salazar would be chuckling right now.

'Very well my friend.' Harry said as he sat up.  
Downstairs, Tonks Resistance, Surry

Harry walked down the stairs just in time to see Tonks slip and drop her trunk causing its contents to open all over the kitchen.

"OH DAMN IT ALL!" Tonks screamed.

"Calm down dear." Mrs. Tonks said she pointed her wand at the trunk and said, "Pack!" All of Tonks' belongings quickly arranged themselves into her trunk.

Harry just stared in awe before hitting himself in the head. "That would have saved so much time." He groaned.

Mrs. Tonks just laughed. "Yes well now come on dears we have to get you both to Kings Cross by 11."

Harry and Tonks quickly followed her out of the house and put their trunks in the magically enhanced boot of the car.

The ride to kings cross was fairly uneventful. Harry had to bite his tongue several times as Salazar kept mentioning things he saw on the side of the road that looked good to eat. It took almost every ounce of will power Harry had to avoid asking how his familiar how he thought he could eat a Porcupine.

When they arrived Harry pulled out his and Tonks trunk. Mrs. Tonks guided them to the barrier where several red heads were standing. Harry noticed that Tonks stiffened when she saw them.

"What's wrong?" Harry asked quietly.

"Weasley twins." She answered darkly.

Harry then saw a pair of identical twins with red hair. He was about to go over and curse them to hell when he felt Tonks grab his shoulder. He turned to face her. She just smiled and mouthed, 'later.'

Harry smiled and nodded his head. When it was their turn to the cross the barrier, Harry and Tonks strode forward and passed through it without a problem. Harry felt his eyes bulge at the massive eighteenth century locomotive parked in the station.

"Come on Harry let's go find a compartment." Tonks said as she pulled him onto the train.

They found an empty compartment near the back and they put there trunks on top. They then got off the train to say goodbye to Mrs. Tonks.

"Bye Mrs. Tonks." Harry said with a smile.

"Goodbye dear." Mrs. Tonks said as she gave him a hug.

"Bye mum." Tonks said as they too embraced.

They were walking back on the train when Harry again spotted the Weasley twins.

"Honestly mum we've never blown up a toilet." One of them said.

One of them noticed him looking at them, and Harry just glared back at him as he boarded the train.

"This year will be different, Tonks, I promise." Harry said as they sat down.

"I know I've got friends." Tonks said with a smile, which Harry returned immediately.

"Harry, Tonks there you are!"

They both turned to see Draco walk into the compartment, two huge brutes walking in behind him.

"Who are they?" Harry asked darkly.

"Oh they are the kids of my dad's friends. This is Gregory Goyle and Vincent Crabbe Jr." Draco said.

"They look as intelligent as a rock, lose them Draco." Harry said pointedly.

It looked like both Crabbe and Goyle were both trying to figure out if they had just been insulted when Draco said, "Beat it you two."

The two Neanderthals walked out of the compartment to find another.

"So Harry what have you been up too? You didn't come by the manor this week." Draco said as they closed the door and Harry performed the locking charm.

"Oh I was working on my Shadow Mage skills." Harry said with a grin.

"Really! That's so cool what can you do?" Draco asked.

"Well I've been able to do everything, but call forth Lethifolds. Your dad wanted me to wait on that. Something about having a patronus charm ready if anything goes wrong." Harry said.

"Yea well that makes sense. Wouldn't want to end up a snack for the creature you called forth." Draco said.

"Hey Draco you should probably put your trunk up before the train starts moving." Tonks said.

“Oh, good call cousin.” Draco said.

Draco grabbed his trunk and was struggling to lift it above his head when Salazar rose off Harry’s shoulder and hissed, ‘Be sssscared, Rabbit!’

Draco’s eyes grew wide at Salazar’s hiss and he lost his grip on his trunk. It fell backwards, knocked him to the floor, and spilled his stuff everywhere. Harry was howling with laughter as Draco got up fuming.

“What did it say!” Draco demanded.

Harry was still laughing, but he managed to compose himself. “He...he...he said, be scared rabbit!” Harry said as Tonks broke into laughter.

“Damn you. I swear, Harry, that thing better watch its back. Now I’ve got to pack everything all over again.” Draco wined.

“No you don’t, cousin. Pack!” Tonks said pointing her wand at Draco’s trunk. All of his contents quickly packed themselves again.

“Useful spell.” Draco commented as the train started to move.

Draco decided to just store his trunk under his seat and the three of them quickly started to talk about all they had accomplished that summer. Tonks said that they’d be incredibly further along than your average first year, which caused both Harry and Draco to grin wildly. After they were about an hour into the trip, there was a knock on the door.

Tonks got up and opened it. A bushy haired girl and a round faced boy stepped into the compartment.

“Excuse me, but Neville lost his toad. Have you seen it?” She asked.

“A toad?” Harry said with a grin. “If a toad got in here, Salazar would have gone nuts.”

“S...Sal...Salazar?” The round faced boy asked weakly.

Salazar took that as his cue to rise up on Harry's shoulders. The two foot Egyptian Asp looked at the newcomers very menacingly.

"You can't have a snake! It says in our letter that only a cat, an owl, or a toad are acceptable pets." The bushy haired girl said.

Harry, Draco, and Tonks all glared at her darkly. "Salazar is my familiar therefore he is allowed. He isn't some pet!" Harry said venomously.

"Y...you...you already have a familiar! I read that it takes years of trust between Animal and Master to get that kind of bond. How long have you had him?" The bushy haired girl asked while the round faced boy looked like he wanted to wet himself as Salazar continued to stare at him.

"Oh when did I get him, Tonk?" Harry asked.

"I think it was a week or so before your birthday so that would be what the 20th of July?" Tonks said with a grin.

"Then he's not your familiar. Like I said it takes years to bond to an animal." The bushy haired girl said.

"You know you are really starting to tick me off. Who are you again?" Harry asked darkly.

"Hermione Granger and this is Neville Longbottom." The bushy haired girl said.

"Longbottom, you're a pureblood, but I've never heard of the name Granger before." Harry said.

"Well that's because my parents are muggles." Hermione said.

You could have heard a pin drop in the room.

"Get out." Harry hissed menacingly.

"W-what?" Hermione said in shock.

"He said get out mudblood. We don't want your kind infecting our compartment." Draco said darkly.

"Y-you can't talk to her like that! Who do you think you are!" Neville said weakly.

"Draco Malfoy!" Draco said puffing out his chest.

"Harry Potter!" Harry said staring into the boys eyes.

"YOU'RE HARRY POTTER!" Hermione and Neville said together in shock.

"I know all about you of course. You're in Great Wizarding Events of the Twentieth Century, The Rise and Fall of Dark Lords, and..." Hermione said.

"Well I can tell you that everything written about me is probably a lie." Harry hissed.

"What! Have you read it? How do you know!" Hermione said indignity.

"Well considering I've never given an interview and out of the four people who were there when Voldemort fell, I'm the only one still alive. So now if you'll piss off, I'd really appreciate it." Harry said darkly.

Hermione turned to leave and Neville was about to follow her when Harry called out, "Longbottom."

Neville stopped at the doorway and turned back around. "You don't have to go you know. You're not muggleborn." Harry said.

Neville looked to Hermione and back to Harry and Draco. "Er...no thanks Harry. Maybe another time. I-I've got to find Trevor." Neville said weakly.

"Your loss, Longbottom. Just don't stick with the muggleborn filth too long. They carry all sorts of diseases." Harry said.

"How dare you!" Hermione yelled as she stormed back into the compartment. "Those books might not have been right about what happened that night, but they did say that you were just a half-blood! That your mother was muggleborn just like me!" Hermione screamed

Harry jumped up, drew his wand, and fired off three consecutive stinging hexes in a matter of seconds. Hermione leapt backwards and let out a shriek of pain as the hexes struck her body.

"Listen up, Granger. My mother was taken at birth and put into an orphanage by muggle filth like your parents! She grew up to never know her true heritage, and I swear to Merlin if you ever insult her like you just did again. It won't be a stinging hex I hit you with! Think about that next time you think you know so much about me!" Harry raged.

Draco and Tonks watched as the two first years quickly ran out of the compartment.

"You know, she really didn't know Harry." Tonks said although she couldn't help but grin.

"I don't care. So I get to practice my stinging hex on someone besides you and Draco for once." Harry said with a grin.

"You're so evil." Draco said as he started to laugh heartedly.

Harry, Draco, and Tonks all bought some food off the trolley when it came by. They ate their snacks and talked for several hours. That was until someone else knocked on their compartment. Tonks got up and opened the door.

"Oh my brother..."

"It looks like we..."

"Found our favorite..."

"Metamorphmagus!"

Harry saw red as he heard the voice of the Weasley twins.

"Go away!" Tonks yelled as she tried to close the compartment door.

One of the twins stuck their foot to stop the door, and they came into the compartment.

"Nymphadora are you hanging out with ickle first years?" One of them asked.

"Are you that desperate for friends?" The other asked.

"Close your mouth, Weasley!" Harry barked as he stood up.

"Oiy Fred." One of them said.

"Yes, George." Fred said.

"I do believe that first year has some bite to him." George pointed out.

"I do believe you are right brother mine." Fred said.

Harry fingered his wand in his robe. He wasn't exactly sure who he was going to curse first. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Draco doing the same.

"Well ickle first year. My name is Fred, and this is my brother George. We are the best pranksters that Hogwarts has ever had since the Marauders." Fred said.

"So it would be smart if you didn't get on our bad side..." George said.

"Or end up in Slytherin house." Fred said with a smile.

"So who are you?" They asked together.

"Harry Potter, and that was my best friend you were just insulting." Harry said darkly.

The twins looked like they had been slapped across their faces.

"You're Harry Potter!" They said together in awe.

"That's right and if you ever insult Tonks ever again or make her change her appearance for your own twisted sense of humor, I'.." Harry said.

The twins looked shocked for a moment but they quickly recovered.

"Yea right..." Fred said.

"You're just..." George continued.

"Some first year..." Fred said.

"What can you do!" They finished together.

As soon as they finished, Harry and Draco both pulled their wands and shouted, "Expelliarmus!" The two spells hit Fred and George Weasley in the chest and they were flung out of the compartment and through the open compartment door across the hall from them. Harry, Draco, and Tonks strode into the compartment, several kids were looking between them and the Weasley twins in horror. Salazar slid off Harry's shoulder and positioned himself on George Weasley's stomach.

George shook himself awake a few seconds later. He let out a loud scream when he saw Salazar, who was hissing menacingly at him.

"So I see you've met my familiar." Harry said to George. "I'd suggest you never insult Tonks again, unless you want to become closer acquainted with him." Harry picked Salazar up and the three of them strode back into their compartment. When the door was closed, they broke down into fits of laughter.

"Oh Harry that was too much. I think he actually wet himself when he saw Salazar." Tonks said between laughs.

"I almost hope that they do mess with us a little. It was just too awesome knocking some sense into those two." Draco said with a laugh.

A loud knock on their compartment door jarred them out of their laughter.

"It's open." Harry called.

The door swung open and another red head strode into the compartment. "You Potter are going to be in some serious trouble when we reach the castle! Two of your peers have already come to complain about you too me, and I witnessed that little spectacle with my brothers from the hallway." The large red head said.

"Oh and what exactly are you going to do about it Weasley? I'm Harry Potter, they won't expel me, and it's not like you can take house points or give detentions since term hasn't started." Harry barked.

"I'll be watching you this year Potter! I'm a prefect so you will show me respect." The Weasley said.

"I show respect those who deserve and earn it. A poor pureblood with an inflated sense of self worth doesn't fall into either of those." Harry said menacingly.

"Ten points from...from..." The prefect Weasley shouted.

Harry, Tonks, and Draco howled with laughter as several people started to crowd around their compartment. "You are an idiot, Weasley! Is Gryffindor house so desperate for a prefect that they chose you? I have no house as I've yet to be sorted!"

Several older students in the hallway started to laugh and Harry noticed that several of them were wearing dark green robes. "Go away Weasley and tell your stupid twin brothers that if they mess with my friends again what I just did will look like child's play." Harry said.

The older Weasley huffed indignity and left the compartment to the laughs of several older students who seemed to follow him shouting 'Ten points from the kid who doesn't have a house yet!'

When most of the crowd had gone, two students stood in the hall looking into their compartment.

"Can we help you?" Tonks asked although she was still giggling.

"So you're Harry Potter?"

"That's what people tell me." Harry responded with a grin.

"I'm Blaise Zabini, this is Susan Bones" The boy said as he and a girl entered their compartment.

"Are you related to the head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement?" Draco asked.

"Yes, she is my aunt." Susan said hesitantly.

"My father knows her. I'm Draco Malfoy." Draco said as she extended her hand.

Susan hesitated for a second before smiling and shaking it. "Nice to meet you, Draco. You and Mr. Potter sure did a number on those two red heads." She said with a grin.

"Mr. Potter? Please call me Harry." Harry said smiling causing Susan to blush.

"Sorry, it's just...you're like a legend around my house." Susan said smiling.

"Well I hate to break it to you Susan, but I'm just Harry." Harry said smiling.

When Tonks started to laugh, he sent her a look that said 'watch it.'

"Right just an eleven year old who is going to be an instant celebrity the minute he walks into Hogwarts." Blaise said.

"I can't stop people from thinking that. All I can do is be myself." Harry said.

"True." Blaise commented before turning to look at Tonks. "Who are you? You don't look like a first year?" Blaise asked

"Oh this is my friends, Tonks. She has a first name, but if you call her it she'll hex your bits good. Isn't that right, Draco." Harry said with a grin.

Draco paled suddenly and just nodded causing Blaise and Susan to laugh.

"Well it's nice to meet you, Tonks. Are you a second year?" Susan said smiling

"Yes. I met Harry this summer and we've been best friends ever since." Tonks said smiling.

"So Potter, what house do you think you'll be in?" Blaise asked.

"Slytherin." Harry replied simply.

"Really! My aunt said she bet you were a Gryffindor like your parents." Susan said stunned.

"Yea well I'm not my parents." Harry said.

"Do you think that Slytherin will take you. I mean I heard a rumor that they only take purebloods." Blaise said.

"Yes, well Harry is a pureblood." Tonks said with a grin.

"What! My father said you were a half-blood?" Blaise said in shock.

"Yea my aunt said the same thing." Susan said.

"Well after I met Harry in Diagon Alley my mother thought there was a chance he was a pureblood. My mum knew Harry's mum from school and she always doubted she was muggleborn. We went to Gringotts and the Goblins performed a blood purity test on him. He's a pureblood." Draco said with a grin.

"Wow. So what was your mum's real name?" Susan asked.

"Oh it was Sa..."

"Draco!" Harry barked. "Sorry, but my mum's real name is a secret. I don't want the wrong people finding out."

"Oh, well I guess I understand." Susan said.

"So what house do you think you'll all be in?" Tonks asked.

"Oh well, I'll probably be in Ravenclaw or Slytherin." Blaise said.

"Well my entire family's been in Hufflepuff, so I'll probably be in that house." Susan said smiling.

"Really I heard Hufflepuff's full of weaklings?" Harry said.

"That's a common misconception. My aunt isn't weak at all and she was a Hufflepuff." Susan said.

"Your aunt was a Hufflepuff!" Draco said in shock.

"Yea. Why does that surprise you?" Susan asked.

"It's just... my father said that she's as tough as they come." Draco said.

"Well I guess we can throw out the weak Hufflepuff rumor." Tonks said with a grin.

"Yea." Draco said in complete shock.

The five of them sat and talked for a while until they felt the train start to slow down.

"Oh we're here and we still need to change!" Tonks said.

"How about you and Susan take our compartment and we'll change in here." Blaise said.

Ten minutes later, Harry, Tonks, Draco, Susan, and Blaise exited the Hogwarts express. Harry was about to ask where they go when he heard someone yelling, "First Years! First Years!"

"You guys have to go up with Hagrid. I'll see you up at the castle!" Tonks said as she ran off towards the carriages.

Harry, Draco, Susan, and Blaise all shared a boat as they crossed the lake. When they saw Hogwarts for the first time they all let out a gasp.

"Wow, now that's impressive." Harry said in shock.

"You can say that again." Draco said in awe.

The four first years exited the boat where they meet a rather angry looking woman.

"Mr. Potter! A school prefect said that several students complained about you, and that you got into a fight on the train." She said.

"Yes ma'am, the students we got into a fight with were the Weasley twins. They were making fun of my friend Tonks. We asked that they leave and warned them several times. When they persisted, Draco and I forced them out of our compartment." Harry said.

"And how pray tell did you force two older students out of your compartment?" The teacher asked again.

"We used the disarming spell, Expelliarmus." Harry said.

"You can perform a disarming spell!" The teacher said in shock.

"Yes, Draco and I both can perform the spell. I'm actually very good at it ma'am." Harry said smiling.

"Mr. Percy Weasley also claims that two students came to him and one of them claimed that you had brought a snake with you. Is that true?" She asked.

"Yes ma'am." Harry said as Salazar raised himself up showing himself.

"Mr. Potter! Snakes are not allowed at Hogwarts!" She said in shock.

"All familiars are allowed ma'am and Salazar is my familiar. We bonded the moment we found each other." Harry said strongly.

"It's true, professor, there was a large flash of red and Salazar grew over a foot when they bonded." Draco said.

"I...I...I see, well...well come along, we have to gather the other first years and get to the sorting." She said.

The four first years followed the professor until they reached the steps of the castle. All the other first years were already there and the teacher walked to the front of the group.

"Welcome to Hogwarts. I am deputy headmistress Minerva McGonagall. I am also head of Gryffindor house. If you follow me, I will take you to the sorting." Professor McGonagall said.

All the first years followed her down a long hallway. Harry heard several people gasp at the moving pictures. The group stopped at the front of two large doors.

"When the doors open you will enter." Professor McGonagall said as she walked down the hallways leaving the first years.

"What do you think we'll have to do to be sorted?" Harry heard the muggleborn girl Hermione ask.

"My brother said we have to fight a one year old mountain troll!"  
Came the response.

Harry turned to see who would say such a ridiculously stupid thing. He spotted a young red haired boy standing next to Longbottom. Harry couldn't help himself the comment was just too dumb. "If you believe that Weasley, you have to be dumber then your brothers!" Harry called out.

The red haired boy blushed furiously and looked like he was about to say something, but the opening of the two doors shut him up.

Harry saw that no one was moving so he grabbed Draco and they strode into the Great Hall. He heard several footsteps behind him, and a second later Blaise and Susan were next to him.

"When I call your name please step forward and put on the sorting hat!" McGonagall called to the first years as she opened a large scroll.

"Abbot, Hannah."

Harry watched as the blond girl with pigtails ran up and put on the hat. A second later the hat said, "HUFFLEPUFF!" A large cheer from the table to far right went up and Harry assumed it must be the Hufflepuffs.

"Bones, Susan."

Susan stepped forward and put the hat on. The hat took a lot longer then it did for Hannah before saying, "Hufflepuff."

Susan jumped down off the stool and ran off to join Hannah at the Hufflepuff table.

Boot, Terry.

As soon as the hat touched the boy's head it screamed, "Ravenclaw!"

"So I take it that the hat takes a longer time with the difficulty of the choice?" Harry said to Draco and Blaise.

"It certainly seems that way, Potter." Blaise said as Mandy Brockelhurst became a Ravenclaw and Lavender Brown became the first Gryffindor.

"How long do you think it'll take to put you into Slytherin, Harry?" Draco asked as Millicent Bulstrode and the boy Draco introduced as Crabbe became Slytherins.

"I don't know it'll probably take some time. I am smart like a Ravenclaw, and I'm sure it'll try to put me in Gryffindor." Harry replied as Michael Crawford became a Ravenclaw and Justin Finch-Fletchley became a Hufflepuff.

"Well I bet you a Gallion my sorting takes longer than yours, Potter." Blaise said.

"You're on Zabini." Harry said as Seamus Finnegan became a Gryffindor.

"Granger, Hermione."

"Wonder where the know it all is going to go?" Harry said.

"A Gallion on Ravenclaw." Draco drawled.

"You're on." Harry said.

The hat seemed to take a long time before it said, "Gryffindor," albeit a bit weakly.

"Ha, fork it over, Draco." Harry said triumphantly as Daphne Greengrass became a Slytherin along with Gregory Goyle.

"Double or nothing says that hat is on my head for less than five seconds before it calls me a Slytherin." Draco said as Neville Longbottom became a Gryffindor and Ernest MacMillan became a Hufflepuff.

"Malfoy, Draco." McGonagall called.

Draco hesitated and looked at Harry. "Well." He said.

"Deal. Zabini you'll count." Harry said.

Draco strode up to the hat and McGonagall placed it on his head.

"1..." Blaise said.

"Slytherin!" The hat screamed instantly.

"DAMN IT ALL!" Harry said a bit too loudly as several first years looked at him.

Draco took the hat off and smirked at Harry as he past him on his way to the Slytherin table.

Harry was really starting to get bored as McGonagall continued to call out names.

"I feel sorry for you Zabini, you'll probably be the last one." Harry said.

"Save the best for last, Potter." Blaise replied instantly.

Harry just laughed as Pavarti Patil became a Gryffindor. He was about to retort when McGonagall called out, "Potter, Harry!"

Instantly the Great Hall broke out into excited whispers. Harry just smirked at Zabini and strode forward with confidence and put on the hat.

"Welcome to Hogwarts Mr. Potter." A voice said in his head.

Can you hear me?

"That I can. I'm in your head and what a head it is. Magical Heir of Slytherin, Metamorphmagus, Shadow Mage, Parselmouth, Charms and Transfiguration gifted. Oh Mr. Potter you have me most impressed. Now where to sort you. Hufflepuff is out. You are loyal, but only to those who have earned your friendship, and that is very

hard to do it appears. Ravenclaw is an option you have an incredible mind and a thirst for learn more powerful magic, maybe too powerful of magic from the looks of things. Gryffindor is also an option, you have courage in spades, but I guess you need that to survive what you have at your relatives.

Get to the point Hat. You know I belong in Slytherin.

"Do you really? Well I guess you are right. It's all there and if you want power, Slytherin will only help you. Oh yes, I can see it clearly now yes the serpent's lair is where you belong most certainly."

"SLYTHERIN!" Harry heard the hat shout followed by a giant gasp that echoed through the hall.

Harry took the hat off and smirked at the gob smacked look on professor McGonagall's face. He waved briefly when he spotted Tonks at the Gryffindor table, and he quickly swept across the hall and took a seat next to Draco at the Slytherin table.

"What was my time?" Harry asked.

"Hum close to a minute." Draco said.

That seemed to jar all the other Slytherins out of their shock. "Potter, you're a Slytherin! A gob smacked looking boy said in shock.

"No kidding, clearly the hat didn't want you in Ravenclaw." Harry said with a smirk.

"But you...you're a Gryffindor!" The boy yelled.

"Draco, can we trade house members? I think he might be a bit too stupid for Slytherin. Clearly I'm a Slytherin as I'm sitting at the Slytherin table, and the words. You do know what words are right? Yes, good. Well the word out of the hat's mouth said, Sly..ther..in not Gry..ffin..dor." Harry said like he was talking to a two year old.

Several of the older Slytherins started to laugh at that, but Harry's attention was shifted away when McGonagall said, "Zabini, Blaise."

"Draco get ready." Harry said.

The moment the hat was placed on Blaise's head. Draco began counting.

"1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29,30,31,32,33,34,35..."

"Slytherin." The hat shouted.

Blaise walked over to the Slytherin table. He was about to sit down when he flicked a gold coin to Harry, who caught it in the air. "It was a while Blaise, but still 20 seconds short." Draco said with a smile."

"Geez Potter were you having a discussion with the hat. You had that thing on your head for a while." Zabini said.

"What can I say I had to convince it that both Ravenclaw and Gryffindor were wrong for me. In the end, it saw why I belong in Slytherin." Harry said with a grin. As he said this, Salazar climbed out of his robes and made his presence known at the table. Several people shrieked when they saw the snake that was wrapped around Harry's shoulder.

'Cowards.' Salazar hissed, and Harry did his best to stifle a laugh. Something that Draco picked up on and smirked.

"Welcome to Hogwarts! Now before we are all watered and feed I would like to make some announcements. First, all students are to know that the forest is forbidden to all students unless accompanied by a teacher. Also I'd like to welcome back Professor Quirrell who will be rejoining the staff as our Defense Against the Dark Arts teacher this year." Dumbledore said.

There were some scattered polite applause, but Harry just looked eyes with an unfriendly looking professor sitting next to Quirrell.

"Whose the guy next to Quirrell?" Harry asked.

"Oh that's my Godfather, Professor Snape. He's our new head of house." Draco replied as he waved to him.

Harry saw as Snape let a smile flicker across his face as he looked at Draco, only to have it disappear when Snape locked eyes with him.

"I don't think he likes me." Harry said.

"No father said that him and your father had some problems at school. I should have asked father to talk to him about you." Draco said sympathetically.

"Finally, I'd like to say that the third corridor of the Charms wing is out of bounds to anyone who doesn't want to die a very painful death." Dumbledore said seriously.

Harry gulped nervously along with the rest of the school. "Is he serious?" Harry asked.

"I think so. I wonder why it's closed though." Draco said.

"Yea." Harry said.

"Now Tuck in!" Dumbledore said.

Harry looked down at the table as food magically appeared all over the place.

"Wow." Harry said with a grin.

Harry and Draco spoke briefly to Theodore Nott, the boy Harry thought was mentally challenged, for a while along with Blaise, Crabbe and Goyle. When the food was all gone, Dumbledore tried to get them to sing the school song, which all the Slytherins refused to do. When the song was done, they got up to head to the common room.

Harry and Draco were walking behind a fifth year prefect when someone shouted, "Hey Potter! Didn't know you were a dark wizard like the rest of those snakes!"

Harry and Draco turned to see a small group of first year Gryffindors, led by the youngest Weasley, smirking at him.

"Hey Weasley, why don't you go steal things from the Gryffindor common room. Merlin knows your family could use the money." Harry said as the Slytherins all started to laugh.

"Ten points from Slytherin for insulting, Mr. Weasley's family!" Percy Weasley shouted.

"Then that will be twenty five points from Gryffindor and a detention for Mr. Weasley for provoking, Mr. Potter, and another five points for his slur against Slytherin house." The voice of Severus Snape came from behind them.

"I suggest that you take your first years up to their common room, Prefect. Oh and Mr. Weasley see Mr. Filch tomorrow at 7pm for your detention. Mr. Potter if you will please follow me." Snape said darkly.

Draco made to join him, but Snape quickly turned on him, "Mr. Malfoy you will accompany the other first years in the dungeon."

"Yes Sir." Draco said as he turned around and left.

Harry followed professor Snape down into the dungeons. He eventually opened up what looked like a potions classroom. Harry followed his head of house into a small office in the back of the classroom.

"Sit down, Mr. Potter." Professor Snape said.

Harry did as he instructed and took a seat.

"Mr. Potter. I'm going to be blunt. I don't want you in my house. I've already received several complains about your behavior on the train for hexing several students as well as being disrespectful to a prefect. I will tell you right now you might be some celebrity to the rest of the school, but you are not too me. You are the son of a big headed fool and I see you have inherited that trait." Snape said.

"Well sir, I don't know what to say. I was provoked into attacking all the people I did, and I wasn't the only person involved in attacking them. As for insulting the prefect, well he was an idiot sir. He attempted to take ten points from my house when I hadn't even been sorted yet. That Percy Weasley has a bigger head than I will ever have. As for being a celebrity, I think that my fame will diminish once idiots like Weasley start spreading rumors of me being a dark wizard." Harry said as he locked eyes with Snape.

Harry felt the slightest tingle in his mind, but his focus was shifted when Salazar launched himself off his shoulder and landed on the table hissing madly.

'How dare you violate my master's mind!' Salazar hissed. As he started to slither closer, Harry saw Snape draw his wand. Not wanting his familiar cursed to bits, he quickly reached out and grabbed him.

'Master he was trying to invade your mind! Do not worry I will protect you now that I know. Keep me with you always!' Salazar hissed.

Harry felt a rage build up in him. He didn't even know wizards could read minds. That could have been disastrous. He didn't want anyone to know he was a Shadow Mage or any of his other talents.

"Sir I would appreciate it if you would refrain from entering my mind." Harry said looking up at Snape as Salazar wrapped himself around his shoulders.

Snape looked shocked for a moment, but then narrowed his eyes. "Snakes are not allowed at Hogwarts, Potter. Not even for a Slytherin celebrity such as yourself."

"He's my familiar, sir." Harry said matching Snape's dark tone.

"We shall see about that." Snape said as he took out his wand and said, "Reveles Familiarus."

The yellow spell hit Harry in the chest before he could avoid it and suddenly both he and Salazar started to glow a deep shade of red.

From the shocked look on Snape's face, Harry assumed that they were indeed familiars.

"I told you so, sir." Harry said.

Harry felt the tingle again, but this time he felt another force like a wall separate the tingle from his own mind. He looked up at Snape who looked completely shocked. It didn't take Salazar's hissing to tell him that Snape had tried to enter his mind again.

"Sir, I will tell you one more time to not enter my mind. If you try it again, I will tell Mr. Malfoy of your actions. I understand he is on the board of governors at Hogwarts." Harry threatened.

"And what makes you think that Lucius will believe you over me. I'm Draco's Godfather." Snape spat.

"I'm Draco's best friend." Harry said just as menacingly.

Snape's eyes went wide with that bit of information. "Get out Potter. The password to the common room is pureblood. The entrance is up the stairs and down the hall to the right. Speak the password to the wall across from the suit of armor with a snake on its shield."

Harry didn't need to be told twice. He got up quickly and left Snape's office.

'I don't like him.' Salazar hissed.

'I don't either, thank you for protecting my mind, Sssalazar.' Harry said.

'That is but one of the benefitssss being your bonded familiar gives me, Harry.' Salazar hissed.

'I will take you everywhere with me, friend. Alert me pleassse if anyone elssse triesss to break into my mind.' Harry said as he reached the suit of armor Snape mentioned.

'I will, Harry.' Salazar said as Harry muttered, "Pureblood."

The wall across from the suit of armor rose into the dungeon exposing a common room. Harry stepped into the room and smiled. "I'm home." He said with a grin.

A/N: Alright thank you everyone! Remember to Review! Now let me point out something that some people have asked about. Harry will not be an ungodly powerful first year. He will be stronger then his classmates, but don't expect him to be challenging Dumbledore or Voldemort to a duel anytime soon. Harry is going to work for his power. This story will encompass all 7 years at Hogwarts, don't forget that.

## CHAPTER 7

### The First Week

Harry followed Draco out of the common room the next morning to the great hall.

"I still can't believe professor Snape tried to read your mind." Draco said.

"Yea I know, lucky I've got Salazar to protect my thoughts. He's going to be constantly wrapped around me under my robes in all my classes. I don't know if it's normal for teachers to try to do that or not, but I don't want anyone in my head." Harry replied.

"Yea I understand. If any of them try to do it again, tell me and I'll write father." Draco said seriously as they sat down for breakfast.

"Hey Potter, Malfoy." Zabini said as he took a seat.

"Zabini." They said together.

"Hey Draco, do you think Tonks could sit over here with us?" Harry said as he looked at Tonks sitting by herself at the Gryffindor table.

"Er well I dunno. I mean Gryffindors and Slytherins don't mix, Harry. You know that." Draco said hesitantly.

"I don't care, she's my friend, and she's your cousin." Harry said.

"Alright, alright let's go and invite her." Draco said as she stood up with Harry.

Harry and Draco walked across the hall. Harry could tell that everyone in the entire school had to have been watching them. Harry forced that to the back of his mind as Draco and he reached the Gryffindor table.

"Tonks do you want to sit with us over at the Slytherin table?" Harry asked.

Tonks smiled brightly and nodded her head. "I'd love to Harry...but...er...I don't want you and Draco to get in trouble with your housemates." Tonks admitted.

"They won't do anything, and if they do Salazar will bite them in their sleep." Harry threatened seriously as Salazar stuck his head out from under his robes causing several Gryffindors to scream.

"Come on Tonks, it's not like you need to hang out with this rift raft." Draco said strongly.

Tonks smiled as she got up and the three of them walked over to the Slytherin table as the entire hall broke into whispers.

When they arrived at the Slytherin table, Blaise moved over giving Tonks a spot. She smiled at him and nodded her thanks.

They talked for a few minutes before Pansy Parkinson arrived with her friend Millicent. The two of them took one look at Tonks and then Harry, Blaise, and Draco. "I never thought I'd see the day when a Malfoy associates with a lowly Gryffindor." She practically spat.

Harry and Draco narrowed their eyes and fingered their wands.

"Shut up you cow." Harry said darkly.

"Cram it, Potter, you're just a lowly half-blood. I don't even know how you got into Slytherin house." Millicent said.

Draco, Harry, Tonks, and Blaise just let out a laugh at that causing both Pansy and Millicent to look on confused.

"First of all, I'm not a half-blood. At least not according to my blood purity test, second if you two ever bad mouth Tonks again, I'll send Salazar into your room while you are asleep." Harry said venomously. Salazar rose up out of his rose at the sound of his name and he eyed the two Slytherin girls before hissing menacingly.

Pansy and Millicent both took off for the other end of the table and sat with Theodore Nott. Harry then turned his attention to the older

Slytherins who were watching them. Harry just smirked at them and went back to eating breakfast.

At eight twenty, professor Snape came by with their schedules for the week. He eyed Tonks for a good minute before he handed Draco, Harry, and Blaise their schedules. Harry could practically see his mind trying to find a rule that they were breaking. Professor McGonagall stopped by the Slytherin table a few minutes later and eyed Tonks oddly as well before handing over her schedule

“So what do you have today?” Tonks asked

“Double Charms with Ravenclaw and Double Transfiguration with the Gryffindors.” Harry and Draco said with a moan.

“Ouch that’s no fun, but I’ve got you beat. I’ve got potions and then defense with the Hufflepuffs. Snape is already mad at me for sitting over here this morning, and I don’t care what Susan said about her aunt, can you imagine practicing spells with Hufflepuffs. I’ll never learn a damn thing.” Tonks said exasperatedly.

Surprisingly several Slytherins close by snickered at that and Harry and Draco smiled. Hopefully they’ll figure out that Tonks isn’t your average Gryffindor.

“So Tonks are you going to try out for the Gryffindor Quidditch team?” Harry asked.

“What! No way, Harry!” Tonks said.

“Why not you’re good, and I heard they need a seeker.” Draco said.

“Why would I want to play with a bunch of people who hate me, Draco! Give me one good reason why I should willingly spend more time with the Weasley Twins, Angelina Johnson, Katie Bell, and Alicia Spinnet!” Tonks huffed.

“Well how about the fact that you are good at Quiddich.” Harry said.

“I’ve never played Seeker before, Harry!” Tonks said.

"So what? Draco and I are both going to try out for the Slytherin team it'll be fun to play against you." Harry said.

"So you two are actually going through with trying out? I've heard some rather shoddy things about the way Slytherin picks their teams." Tonks said quietly.

"Yea, father explained it to us. Believe me I'm not looking forward to it, but I'm game. We are full up at Chasers, but I think we are good enough to make the reserve team at the very least." Draco said.

"Ok Tonks how about a compromise. If Draco and I make the team, as reserves or whatever, and you make the Gryffindor team, you play. If we don't make it on the Slytherin, team you don't have to play even if they pick you." Harry said.

Tonks thought about it for a while before nodding her head. "Deal." She said as she got up and walked over to the Gryffindor table where she found a lean looking boy. Harry and Draco watched as she spoke to him for a few minutes and then shook his hand.

"Well I guess she got a tryout." Draco said with a smirk.

"Is she really good?" Blaise asked.

"Yea she's pretty good. We played a lot at my house over the summer." Draco said.

"Ugh then was it a good idea to have her play? I mean wouldn't it be easy for us to win if she didn't?" Blaise asked.

"Maybe, I don't care though. I just want to play against her." Harry said with a smirk.

"Are you that confident you'll get on the team this year?" Blaise asked in shock.

Harry noticed that several older Slytherins as well as a large seventh year were now paying very close attention to him.

"Yes." Harry said bluntly.

"Well at least you're confident." Blaise said.

"Harry's a natural flier, his first time on a broom he did dives and maneuvers I'd never even seen before. I'm no slouch either, but Harry's a demon in the air." Draco said projecting his voice so that the older students could hear it.

Harry felt his face blush slightly at the high praise, but was saved from speaking up when Blaise got up. "Well I think it's time we get to class. I don't want to be late to either McGonagall or Flitwick's class."

Harry and Draco nodded in agreement and they grabbed their bags and quickly left the Slytherin table. A few minutes later they made their way to the Charms corridor and stepped into a classroom. Much to their surprise, every single Ravenclaw first year was already present. Blaise double checked his watch and then looked up at them.

"You do know class doesn't start for another five minutes right? How long have you guys been here?" Blaise asked.

"Oh we got here twenty minutes ago." An Asian girl said.

Harry just broke out into fits of laughter. "Oh Blaise, you were almost a Ravenclaw! Can you see yourself arriving to class twenty five minutes early!" Harry said.

Blaise just colored and said, "Yes well I'd remind you, Potter, that the hat wanted you for Ravenclaw also!"

"Touché." Harry said with a laugh as they took a seat in the second row.

A few minutes later, the rest of Slytherin arrived, and a few moments after that the charms teacher, professor Flitwick, entered the room.

"Welcome to your first charms class!" The tiny professor said with a smile. He instantly started to take attendance. He hesitated only briefly on Harry's name and then he launched into a long winded discussion about Charms. Harry got bored very quickly. He put his head on the cold the table, and started to nod off.

Harry wasn't sure exactly when he fell asleep, but the next thing he realized he heard, "MR. POTTER IF YOU COULD JOIN US!"

Harry instantly woke up and noticed that everyone was looking at him. Draco and Blaise were both trying not to laugh. "Ugh what's that, sir?" Harry asked.

"Mr. Potter get up here please." Professor Flitwick said with annoyance.

Harry got up nervously and walked to the front of the room.

"Mr. Potter if you believe that you can just sleep through my first lecture then you are sorely mistaken. The information I'm trying to impart to you now is completely necessary if you want to have any basis for learning charms! Now, since you believe that you don't need to listen to me. I want you to demonstrate the first charm that this class is supposed to learn, the levitation charm." Flitwick said strictly as he pointed to his desk.

Harry did his best to suppress a grin as he drew his wand. "No problem professor. Wingardium Leviosa!" Harry said as he pointed his wand at Flitwick's desk. The desk instantly rose off the floor a good two feet and Harry held it for a few moments before he set it back down again.

When he turned to face the professor, he had to bite his tongue to restrain his laughter. Professor Flitwick as well as the entire class except for Draco and Blaise were staring at him in shock.

"M...Mr. Potter! I...I meant for you to levitate the feather not my d...desk!" Flitwick said in shock.

"Oh well you just pointed, sir. Sorry I just assumed you meant your desk." Harry said with a smirk.

"Mr. Potter thirty points to Slytherin. I haven't seen such proficiency in Charms since...since...Merlin's Ghost are you....are you a pro..."

"No sir." Harry said quickly.

"V-very well, Mr. Potter. Go back to your seat and read. Just don't fall asleep." Flitwick said.

Harry walked back to his desk with a smug look on his face. He noticed that every Ravenclaw was staring at him awe while the Slytherins looked slightly intimidated.

The rest of the class was fairly uneventful. Harry read ahead in his charms book, and practiced the wand movements for a few minor jinxes and spells. When the bell rang, Flitwick called out, "I want ten inches of Parchment on Charm theory for next week. Mr. Potter please stay."

Harry stayed in his seat as everyone filled out of the classroom. When the last student was gone Flitwick locked the door. "Mr. Potter, that was very impressive. I haven't had a student levitate anything on their first attempt since your mother." Flitwick said.

"Thank you, sir, but that wasn't my first attempt. You see I discovered the little loop hole for doing underage magic." Harry said with a smile.

"A loophole? What do you mean?" Flitwick asked.

"Er well sir, you are aware that they don't place the tracking charms on your wand until you arrive at Hogwarts, correct." Harry said.

"Oh, Merlin. I knew that was going to come back and bite us at some point. So Mr. Potter, I take it you do not possess your mother's gift then, you've just practiced some of the spells already." Flitwick said.

"Well kind of sir." Harry said.

"What do you mean kind of?" Flitwick asked slightly intrigued.

"Well, like I said sir, I'm not a protégé like my mother, but I am charms gifted, and I did managed to do the levitation spell on my first attempt, sir." Harry said with a smile.

"Mr. Potter! How do you know you possess a gift for charms?" Flitwick asked.

"Oh well. When I realized we could do magic outside of school, I found that I could do Charms incredibly easily. I would just have to look at the incantation and the wand movement and it would always work for me. I stayed with Tonks for the last part of the summer and she found a book that talked about the difference between being talented, gifted, and a protégé. Since I couldn't do any spell I wanted, I figured I wasn't a protégé, but I still possessed an unnatural ease for the subject. When I read the description for being gifted, it just fit." Harry said with a smile.

Flitwick let out a laugh and then he banged his hands on his desk. "I don't believe it, in the last two decades a Charms protégé and Charms gifted student has gone to Hogwarts and neither of them have been in my house." Flitwick said in annoyance.

"Ha, sorry, sir. The hat thought about putting me in Ravenclaw, but it decided on Slytherin in the end." Harry said.

"Your mother said nearly the exact same thing, but for Gryffindor." Flitwick said sadly. "So Mr. Potter, clearly you are going to be more advanced than any other first year student. I'm quite sure you will be quite board sadly." Flitwick said.

"Well sir, I want to become a master while I'm still in Hogwarts like my mother, so I was hoping you wouldn't mind giving me some personal tutoring? In return I could help tutor first years in charms, and during class if you are lecturing I could read ahead or on some other material you think would help me." Harry said hopefully.

"Mr. Potter, I commend you for your desire to become a master of charms. Very few people actually have the desire to do so. I would

have no problem giving you some extra lessons in exchange for your helping of other first years. As for class, I believe you have presented a very good option. I'll speak to professor Dumbledore about getting you some books on charms for the restricted section." Flitwick said.

"Restricted section?" Harry asked.

"Oh well that's the area of the library where most of the dark arts books are located. The charms books I want to give you are not dark, but they are very advanced and contain a more thorough description of the theory of charms." Flitwick said practically bouncing with excitement.

"Well I'd appreciate that, sir." Harry said honestly.

"Yes well I had better get you a note for professor McGonagall, wouldn't want you to get in trouble on the first day now." Flitwick said excitedly as he wrote a quick note.

"Thank you professor." Harry said sincerely as he left the charms class room.

Harry found his way to the Transfiguration classroom and walked inside. When he entered, he noticed that where the teacher should have been sat a black cat. Remembering what Tonks said about professor McGonagall being an Animagus, Harry approached the cat and said, "I'm sorry I'm late, professor McGonagall, but professor Flitwick asked me to stay after class."

"When you got that scar it must have fried your brain, Potter, that's a cat you're talking too!" The youngest Weasley said. All of the Gryffindors started to howl with laughter, but they stopped a moment later when the cat turned into an irate looking professor McGonagall.

"MR. WEASLEY DETENTION AND TWENTY POINTS FROM GRYFFINDOR!" Professor McGonagall said sharply the second she appeared.

Harry was glad professor McGonagall chose that moment to appear as he was about a second away from hexing the stupid Gryffindor.

"Mr. Potter you may take your seat. Oh, and how did you know I was an animagus? I must say I enjoy the shock that it causes my first years." Professor McGonagall asked.

"Oh Tonks told me." Harry said and he took a seat next to Draco.

Professor McGonagall just nodded her head, took out her wand, and turned her desk into a pig and then back again. Harry's eyes rose just like everyone else. I want to be able to do that! I could turn Dudley into a pig! Talk about a fitting torture! But Harry already knew it would be some time before he was turning anything into a pig, let alone a person.

Harry found Transfiguration slightly more interesting than his first Charms lesson. Not because McGonagall's subject was more interesting, but because he just started to read ahead in his book to keep him awake. He kept quiet and let his classmates and the annoying Gryffindor know it all answer all of professor McGonagall's questions. When it was time to try to turn their match into a needle, Harry just set his match on the table and continued to read. He laughed at the annoyed look professor McGonagall had on her face when she had to award Draco ten points for completing the transfiguration before anyone. He noticed that the muggle born witch Granger was close, but that she lacked the proper wrist flick. She'd probably get it right by the end of the lesson; however, no one else except Blaise was even close to accomplishing it.

"Hey Blaise," Harry whispered, "you need to shorten your wand movement just a little. You'll have it if you do that."

Blaise eyed Harry carefully before he shrugged his shoulders, shortened his wand movement, and a second later his match became a pin.

"Thanks Potter." Blaise said quietly.

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Minerva McGonagall was reasonably impressed by her group of first years. Draco Malfoy had already completed the transfiguration. She noticed that one of her own Gryffindors Hermione Granger was close to accomplishing it as was the Slytherin Blaise Zabini.

She would have offered to help them, but she couldn't help but keep her eyes off the young Harry Potter. She was so sure that he would have been a Gryffindor, just like his parents, when she heard he was coming to Hogwarts this year. She had been surprised to say the least though when Percy Weasley had come to her with several complaints about him from other students. She was all set to give him detention for a month for attacking two students, but she held back when he explained about how the Weasley twins had been insulting Ms. Tonks and would not leave. She was vaguely aware that the Weasley twins gave Ms. Tonks a rough time last year and was glad she had found a friend. She was concerned however with both Mr. Potter's and Mr. Malfoy's apparent knowledge of the disarming charm though. Another complaint was that he had brought a snake with him, yet he assured her that it was his bonded familiar. She was hesitant to believe him, but a simple spell could be used to determine that later, and they were already late. In hindsight, she should have figured anyone who brought a snake with them would have been a Slytherin. Still she was shocked when the hat shouted that he was a Slytherin. It almost seemed like a travesty the son of her two favorite students in her rival house.

The boy seemed to stir controversy wherever he went. A few members of her house had accused him of being a dark wizard after the feast, something that cost her house thirty points. She was ready to argue with Severus in the staff meeting at the end of the week, but seeing Mr. Weasley insult Mr. Potter about his scar of all things caused her to forget that notion instantly. The most interesting thing the boy had done so far though had to be bringing young Nymphadora over to the Slytherin table to eat. It was the talk of the entire Great Hall including the staff table. The fact that the young Draco Malfoy went with Mr. Potter to escort Ms. Tonks shocked everyone as she was a well known half-blood. Minerva was aware that Draco and Nymphadora were cousins, but she was sure that Andromeda would never have allowed the two to meet. Perhaps Mr.

Potter would be a good influence on the young Malfoy heir. Minerva thought.

Currently she was annoyed at the young man though. The fact that he did not even come close to listening to her during her lecture did not go unnoticed by her. She would have yelled at him except he was being quiet and was reading his transfiguration book. So she chalked it up to him learning better by reading than listening and taking notes. The text book did say almost the exact same thing for such simple transfiguration, and many people learned in a similar way.

When it was time for everyone to attempt the transfiguration though, she noticed he did not so much as raise his wand. In fact, his match looked like it hadn't even moved from where he set it on his desk. She kept an eye on him for the first ten minutes and the boy hadn't even attempted the spell. What he did do though surprised her greatly. She saw him lean over and tell the young Zabini that he should shorten his wand movement. He was completely correct and a moment later Blaise Zabini had achieved the Transfiguration.

"Mr. Zabini ten points to Slytherin." She called.

She watched the young Potter boy for ten more minutes and she was starting to get angry. She didn't mind people struggling at her subject, it was among the most difficult after all, but she would not tolerate someone not trying. She awarded Hermione Granger ten points for completing the spell and then turned on Mr. Potter.

"Mr. Potter, you have not even attempted the Transfiguration this class. Now you will try the spell or I will take thirty points from Slytherin for failing to follow my instructions." She said strongly.

She saw the Potter boy look up at her and smirk. She was about to tell him to wipe the smile off his face when he waved his wand and the match transfigured into a pin; however, unlike the other pins, Mr. Potter's pin was gold. To say she was stunned at the boy's ability was an understatement, the way he did it made it look like it was no trouble at all. She noticed that all the students turned to look at him in shock excluding the young Draco Malfoy.

“Mr. Potter, that’s amazing! Can you tell me how you made the pin appear gold?” She asked quickly.

“Well ma’am for all basic transfiguration such as this, the spell and the wand movements aren’t the difficult aspect. There are two parts where most people fail in transfiguration. The first part is that they don’t have a clear enough picture of what they want. That’s why so many people have little half pins half matches like Mr. Longbottom over there. The second factor that is important about transfiguration is having confidence that the transfiguration is possible. If you can believe that it’s possible to turn something into something else, then it is a lot easier to focus on accomplishing the magic. I take it that’s why you turned your desk into a pig to show the muggle born students that transfiguration is indeed doable. When you get right down to it all transfiguration is about those two things, Image and Intent. If you can understand that, then you will have a good firm basis in all future more complex transfigurations. Now as to why my pin is gold. When most people think of a pin, they think of it as a small silver metal. I wanted mine to appear gold so I focused clearly on a gold pin in my mind, and I had the confidence that I could make it happen.” Harry said boldly.

In all her years at Hogwarts, Minerva McGonagall had never heard a first year student describe the theory of transfiguration so well. She was completely speechless. Awarding points for such a masterful answer didn’t seem to do it justice. Her mind was spinning, Albus had told her the boy would likely know a little magic from spending time with Ms. Tonks, but this was beyond anything she thought remotely possible. She was still compiling her thoughts when another student decided to speak up.

“And how do you know so much about transfiguration!” Hermione Granger snapped.

Harry just turned to look at the red faced girl. “I read it in a book. A credible book not that trash that you read, Granger.” Harry barked out in a tone that left no room for arguments.

The little argument across her classroom snapped Minerva out of her thoughts. “Ms. Granger ten points from Gryffindor for speaking out.

Mr. Potter ten points from Slytherin for the same reason, but take fifty points to Slytherin for the best description of the basic theory of Transfiguration that I've ever heard! Do you mind if I keep this pin?" Professor McGonagall asked.

All the Slytherins in the class looked very smug at the shocked Gryffindors.

"No professor, keep it, I can always make another one." Harry said with a grin. He knew he impressed her.

The bell rang in the hall and all the students began to gather their belongings. This seemed to jar professor McGonagall back to reality as she was just staring at Harry's golden pin. "Oh I want one foot of parchment on the theory of transfiguration. Mr. Potter you are excused as you already proved that you know the theory perfectly, please stay after class as well."

"Is this going to be a trend all year for your, Potter?" Blaise asked.

"What can I say Zabini, I'm popular." Harry said with a smirk.

"Draco remember we're meeting Tonks in the library later." Harry said as Draco exited the door.

Harry momentarily locked eyes with Granger and he just smirked at the know it all. About time she learns her place. He thought viciously.

When the last student was gone, professor McGonagall took a seat behind her desk. "Mr. Potter I have to say I'm very impressed."

It wasn't a question so Harry just stayed quiet. He wasn't going to give away any information to this woman. Flitwick didn't try to enter his mind, but he was still wary of the staff.

"Mr. Potter, you clearly have inherited your father's natural ability for transfiguration. I was wondering if you'd say you feel a pull towards it in any way?" Professor McGonagall asked.

Harry actually laughed at her round about way to ask such an easy question. "No professor, I don't feel a pull for the material, but I am gifted in Transfiguration." Harry admitted.

Harry actually smiled when his gold pin drop out of McGonagall's hand and land on her desk with a slight tinging sound. Harry saw his professor go through several emotions, curious, hopeful, dubious, and intrigued before a stoic appearance took over. "Indeed. You are certain of this?" McGonagall asked.

"Yes, Tonks gave me a book that described being talented, gifted, and a protégé. I'm not a protégé as I can't just do any transfiguration without a spell. After I read a book on basic transfiguration theory, I found that I could do most of the simple spells like turning a mouse into a pincushion on my first attempt. I haven't pushed myself that far though, so I don't know the extent of my ability." Harry said.

"Mr. Potter is that why you were reading the book instead of listening to me? Were you reading ahead?" Professor McGonagall asked.

"Yes, ma'am. I've read a great deal of the book although not all of it. I was just reading about turning a rat into a tea pot." Harry said.

"That's about where you should be before Christmas! Mr. Potter are you telling me that you can do all the spells up to that point?" Professor McGonagall demanded.

"No ma'am. I didn't have the materials to practice those spells at Tonks' home. I just have read that far. I don't know where I am on the practical level, but I imagine I'm further ahead than most." Harry said.

"I see. Well Mr. Potter what do you propose we do. I can't just let you not do the assignments." McGonagall asked.

"Well ma'am I was kind of hoping you could help me. I want to get a mastery while I'm still in school like my mum did. I was wondering if you would be willing to work with me? Maybe get me some other books that I could read during class if it's a lecture on something I already know. If it's a practical thing that I can do already, I could help out some of my housemates." Harry proposed.

"Like you did for Mr. Zabini?" McGonagall asked.

Harry must have shown his shock because McGonagall chuckled, "Yes, Mr. Potter I saw that, and you did help him. I suppose that arrangement could work. If I do decide to help you Mr. Potter, I want you to know that I expect you to work hard. I don't have a lot of free time, but I'm willing to give some of it up for such a promising student."

"Thank you ma'am you won't regret it." Harry said.

"I'm sure, Mr. Potter, now run along. I'm sure Mr. Malfoy and Ms. Tonks are waiting for you." McGonagall said.

When Harry left, Minerva sat behind her desk in deep thought. I really wish he was in my house. He really does have his father's talent. He is confident, but not as cocky as James was. I really do need to speak to Albus, Harry is something special, and if he's serious about getting a mastery while he's in school! Merlin, the boy could become one of the greatest masters of Transfiguration ever.

Great Hall, Hogwarts

The next few days past fairly quickly for Harry and Draco. There classes were interesting, but Harry didn't like any of them as much as Charms or Transfiguration. Harry had hoped that Defense Against the Dark Arts would have been fun, but Quirrell was a horrible teacher, and he learned nothing interesting. Herbology was interesting as it was taught in a greenhouse, but it reminded Harry of being forced to work in the Dursley's garden far too much. Astronomy was pretty interesting and the view from the Astronomy tower was awesome. History of Magic was taught by a Ghost, but once the novelty of throwing things threw Binns wore off, Harry and Draco found the class to be a dreadful bore and slept through it.

Finally, Friday rolled around and Harry and Draco were very excited. Today they only had one class, Double Potions with the Gryffindors, and after that they had Quidditch try outs.

Tonks had already tried out for Oliver Wood, the Gryffindor Quidditch captain, and made it on the team. She had described him as a complete nut job who was obsessed with winning the Quidditch cup. Tonks had taken to sitting with the Slytherins at every meal, and after the initial shock of a Gryffindor sitting at their table wore off, everyone who had a problem with it just ignored her.

"Don't worry if you don't make the team, Harry, I won't think any less of you." Tonks said with a smile.

"Oh no you don't! I'm going to make the team, and you are going to play for Gryffindor whether you like it or not." Harry said strongly.

"Draco, would it be too much to ask for you to knock Harry off his broom?" Tonks asked sweetly.

"And how am I supposed to do that? Have you seen him fly?" Draco asked.

Harry smiled Draco had a point. As soon as the day of the tryout was posted, he and Draco had taken their Nimbus 2000s out to practice every day after lessons. Harry had to admit that he was a very good flier. They had noticed several older Slytherins watching them one day and Harry took that as a cue to do a corkscrewing dive from over 300 feet. He pulled up when he was just inches from the ground, and both of them laughed very hard as the older Slytherins' mouths just dropped wide open in shock.

"Well still do your best. I hate spending time with the twins, and now that I'm on the team they've started to follow me around hitting people and saying they're my personal beaters. I swear if they weren't scared of you, Harry, they'd be here right now hitting the people sitting next to me." Tonks huffed.

"They're scared of me?" Harry asked with a laugh.

"Yea, I don't think anyone has ever hexed them that hard and then threatened them with death by snake bite before." Tonks giggled.

The three of them talked for a little while longer, but at ten till eight, Draco stood up and said it was time to go to Potions. They said goodbye to Tonks and made their way down to the potions classroom in the dungeons.

Harry and Draco entered the dungeons with the rest of the Slytherins and they took a seat near the front of the room. The Gryffindors entered a few minutes later and Harry was happy that Weasley was not among them. Snape came in from his office a few moments later and began taking roll. When he got to Harry's name, he stooped.

"Ah yes, Mr. Potter, our new celebrity." Snape sneered. "Mr. Potter, your status will not get you any favors in this class, now tell me what would I get if I added a root of asphodel to an infusion of wormwood?"

Harry froze he had no clue; surely Snape didn't expect him to have memorized every fact in his potions book.

"I don't know, sir." Harry admitted.

Snape sneered, "Clearly fame is not everything then is it, five points from Slytherin. I'll give you another chance. Tell me where would you go if I asked you to find me a Bezoar?" Snape asked.

Harry smiled he knew this one, "In the stomach of a goat, sir." Harry said proudly.

If it was possible, Snape's sneer actually got worse. "Correct, last question. What is the difference between monkshood and wolfsbane?" Snape demanded.

Harry remembered wolfsbane. It sounded like werewolf so it stuck in his head when he was flipping through the pages. He remembered that it was the same plant that muggles called aconite, but what was the difference between it and monkshood. Could Snape just be trying to trick him? He certainly was devious enough to throw a trick question in the mix. Throwing caution to the wind, Harry said, "Er...I...don't think there is a difference, sir."

"Correct, ten points to Slytherin." Snape said darkly. "To answer the first question adding root of asphodel to an infusion of wormwood will give you a sleeping potion so powerful it's known as..."

Suddenly the door opened and Weasley and Longbottom stood there completely drenched from head to toe.

"Weasley, Longbottom ten points each for being late, and another five for being improperly attired." Snape said eyeing their drenched clothing with disdain.

"But sir, Peeves hit us with..." Weasley started.

"That will be another five for speaking back to a teacher, Weasley." Snape said.

"But sir, he was just trying to explain what..." Hermione said.

"That will be a detentions, Granger. I do not recall asking you to interject your opinion into this conversation. Now you two take a seat." Snape spat.

Harry and Draco sniggered as Weasley and Longbottom took a seat behind them.

The rest of the lesson went by fine, Salazar said that he sensed Snape using his mind reading skill, but assured him it was never directed at him or Draco so Harry paid it no mind. When they were preparing to put the last ingredient in their cauldron, Harry heard a loud hiss and he turned around in time to see Neville's cauldron actually start to melt. He grabbed Draco and he dragged him out of the way just before the green liquid spilled exactly where he was standing a moment before. They quickly climbed up on their table as Neville started to moan in pain, his skin covered in boils.

"IDIOT BOY! Does it not say to add the porcupine quills after taking the cauldron off the fire? Weasley take him to the hospital wing now! Everyone else prepare a sample of your potion and bring it up here." Snape said.

"Professor Snape, our cauldron was struck by the same thing that melted Longbottoms, and the cauldron split open on the bottom." Draco said.

"You and Mr. Potter will both receive a passing grade as it was Mr. Longbottoms idiocy that caused you to not have a sample. I would also appreciate it if you both you and Mr. Potter would stay after class, Draco." Snape said.

Harry and Draco waited for everyone else to drop off their potion and file out of the room. When they were alone with their head of house, they entered his office and took a seat.

"I understand you both are going to try to tryout for the house Quidditch team." Snape said.

"Yes sir." Draco said.

"I am going to warn you, several older students have been overheard discussing putting you in your place. I believe that they have taken offense to several things you and Mr. Potter have been doing." Snape warned seriously.

"What things, sir?" Harry asked.

"I would have thought that would have been obvious, Potter. You brought a Gryffindor to the Slytherin table without asking if it would be ok. Also, Mr. Malfoy's constant boasting about your skills on the pitch has made you a fair amount of enemies. I just thought that you should be aware of this before you go to the try out." Snape said.

"Thank you, sir." Draco and Harry said as they stood up.

"Don't both to thank me, Potter. I wouldn't have bothered to tell you if I didn't think my Godson would have told you the second he was out of my sight." Snape sneered.  
Quidditch Pitch, Hogwarts

Harry and Draco arrived at the pitch twenty minutes later both clutching their Nimbus 2000s. When they arrived, all the older

students looked at them and their brooms with contempt. Ten minutes later, a burly seventh year named Marcus Flint called to the group from the air.

"Alright, we are looking for a seeker as well as a two reserve chasers, and a reserve beater. If you want to try out for seeker, step forward. If you are going for chaser, move to my right, and if you are trying out to be a beater, move to my left." Flint called.

Harry stepped forward, he would have much rather been a chaser, but Draco had convinced him that with his ability to dive and dodge, he should go after the open Seeker spot. Harry looked around at his competition. There were four other boys whom Harry recognized from breakfast, but he couldn't remember their names.

"Alright now the first thing a seeker's got to have is some skill flying so get up into the air you lot." Flint called to them.

Harry got on his broom and took off up to where Flint was perched some fifty feet in the air. He was joined a second later by the four other boys.

"Alright our Seekers got to be fast and able to dodge on the move, so I'm going have you five race around the pitch five times with the bludgers lose. We've got our starting beaters in the air along with six people trying for reserve spots so expect a lot of attention as you five are their only target." Flint barked.

Harry floated over to the starting position and a moment later Flint sent off a stream of green sparks into the air. Harry took off like a rocket as he raced out ahead. He saw the first bludger heading right for him the second one a few meters behind it. Harry sensed another boy gaining on him directly behind him so he decided to try a very difficult maneuver that he read about in Draco's Quidditch tactics book. He flew directly at the oncoming Bludger at full speed. He got within five feet of the first bludger when he arched his broom up allowing it to shoot underneath him and connect with the face of the boy directly behind him. Harry heard the crowd of chaser candidates let out a loud 'ouch' as he continued to race around the pitch.

Harry's size gave him a huge speed advantage over the other kids, and he soon found himself way out front with only the Bludgers to bother him. He also realized that the beaters seemed to have decided that the other Seeker candidates weren't worth attacking and sent every Bludger at him. By the end of the final lap, Harry was exhausted. He had been pushing his broom full on for fifteen minutes and dodging Bludgers that seemed to come from every direction as the eight Beaters assaulted him. When he finished the final lap, he immediately flew over to Flint who was grinning slightly.

The other boys arrived a minute later, and Harry saw the murderous looks they were all sending him.

"Alright, that was pretty good, we only lost one of you guys. The next test will be diving. I want to see how fast you four can dive and how close to the ground you can get before you pull out. I'm going to head to the ground, where I'll keep track of your speed and how close you get to the ground with a speed and depth charm. I will send up your stats after you dive so you know how you did." Flint said as he flew to the ground.

"Scared firsty?" A menacing larger boy asked as soon as Flint was gone.

"No why would I be?" Harry asked sarcastically. It was the truth he wasn't scared, but he was in no mood to talk to some idiot so he flew up a little higher.

Flint shot off some green sparks as the sign for the first person to dive. The obnoxious boy who spoke to Harry flew up for a second and then dove to the ground. Harry watched as he speed down at a fairly controlled pace. When he was close to the ground, he pulled up and then landed on the ground. Flint seemed to look at a piece of paper before sending up his stats, 120 Mph and 14 feet 11 inches till the ground.

Harry yawned slightly, he knew he could do better. His Nimbus top speed was 175 Mph and he loved to get within a couple of inches of the ground.

Flint again shot off sparks and an excited fourth year dove to the ground. Harry watched as he dove even slower than the last seeker and pull up a lot earlier. Flint shot up his scores a second later. 100 Mph 25 feet 7 inches till the ground.

Again Harry yawned something that didn't go unnoticed by the other boy who was staring daggers at him. "If you think it's so easy, why don't you go next!" He shouted.

Harry just shrugged his shoulders and when Flint shot off green sparks for the next Seeker, Harry flew a few up and then dropped into a 90 degree dive, which shocked everyone. Harry loved to dive, the feeling of the wind blowing against his face was truly amazing. He saw the ground rapidly approaching him, but he knew he still had time, he wasn't worried. Harry heard several gasps from the chaser group as he continued to fall at full speed. When he was about to crash, Harry tugged on the handle as hard as he could and leveled off before rising a few feet into the air and then landing. Flint seemed to be staring at him with glee now as he shot up his score into the air. Harry grinned as he read, 173 Mph 1 foot 1 inch till the ground.

Harry smirked he could practically see the other two boys pale from where he was. Flint shot off green sparks again, and the boy who had spoken to Harry in the air seemed to lose control of his broom when he was about fifteen feet off the ground and crashed a few moments later. Harry was surprised when Flint still shot up his score, but laughed when he read 135 Mph Zero feet till ground, the idiot.

Flint observed the three remaining Seekers with a grin. "Alright, well every test so far has meant absolutely nothing. It was just to weed out the pretenders. The first to get the snitch gets the spot!" Flint said as he through the small golden ball into the air. Harry watched it for as long as he could, but it eventually disappeared.

Flint waited a few more minutes before he shot up his green sparks and the three Seekers flew in the air in search of the elusive golden ball. Harry found himself circling the pitch like a hawk looking for the little ball. Flint was now working with the chasers and every now a stray bludger would come flying out of nowhere, but it was reasonably easy.

Harry was beginning to get frustrated twenty minutes later, but then he caught a glimpse of the Snitch across the pitch; however, it was floating just above the head of another Seeker. Knowing that if he flew straight at him, the jig would be up, Harry prayed that his plan would work and took on a focused look and dove to the ground. He instantly heard the sound of two whooshing brooms a second later. Harry turned his head slightly and saw the two other Seekers were indeed following him. He slowed down and allowed them time to catch up before he pulled up quickly and flew to the Snitch. He caught it a few moments later and landed on the ground with a grin.

Flint flew down a few seconds later and grinned like mad. "Well Potter, I guess Malfoy was right, you are a natural flier. You'll join the team for practice three nights a week in the sun or sleet. You can take a seat up in the stands to watch the rest of the try out or head out now.

Harry smiled and quickly flew up to the stands to watch the rest of the tryout. Harry thought that Draco was definitely one of the two best chasers and was sure that he'd get a spot on the reserve team. Flint called the practice and told everyone that he would make his decisions about the reserves by Sunday night. Harry met up with Draco, who congratulated him constantly.

"So you're going to be going up against Tonks in the first match. That's going to be so awesome. Remember if you need to throw her off a little just call her Nymmy." Draco said with a grin.

Harry looked aghast. "Draco are you mad! If I called her Nymmy during the game, Tonks will take a beaters bat and break my skull open in front of Dumbledore without a second thought!"  
Staff Lounge, Hogwarts

While Harry and Draco were outside trying out for the Quidditch team, the first Hogwarts staff meeting was taking place.

"Well I hope everyone had a pleasant first week? I trust you all haven't been handing out too many detentions thus far." Dumbledore said with a grin.

There were some slight laughs at this and the meeting continued. After a few minutes, Dumbledore smiled and asked, "Does anybody have anything to say so far about this year's crop of first years. They seem like a lively bunch to me."

There were some slight chuckles at this as well, but professor McGonagall and Flitwick both stood up to say something at the same time.

"Minerva, you may go first." Filius said bowing.

"Oh no Filius, I insist you first." Minerva said kindly.

Flitwick grinned broadly and said, "Thank you. Albus, I have wonderful news actually. It seems that young Harry Potter is Charms gifted."

At this announcement the staff members gasped and Minerva paled in shock. Dumbledore's eyes just twinkled away merrily. "Really Filius, I do suppose it's possible what with Lily being a protégé, but how are you certain?"

"Well the young man seemed quite lethargic in my class on Monday. Oh well truthfully he fell asleep." Flitwick said sheepishly as several teachers laughed. "I woke him up and proceeded to rant a little bit about him needing to know what I was talking about to have a solid grounding in charms. I then told him to stand up and perform the levitation charm if he didn't think he needed my lecture. Well needless to say I was rather shocked when the boy actually performs the charm flawlessly, and not on a feather, but on my desk!"

"Merlin, Filius the boy was able to levitate your desk on his first attempt at the charm!" Professor Vector said in awe.

"No...well yes...ah let me explain. I held Mr. Potter after class, and he explained he became aware of our little pre-first year loophole in regards to underage magic." Flitwick said as several staff members groaned.

"Albus I told you that was going to be a problem one of these days." Professor Spout said shaking her head.

"Indeed, but that is a problem for later. Please continue, Filius." Dumbledore said.

"Well he explained how he stayed with Ms. Tonks for the end of summer and how she gave him a book on the difference between talented, gifted, and protégés. He said that he found charms incredibly easy and was able to cast several simple charms on his first try after just looking at the wand movement and spell. He said that the book described being gifted almost exactly as that." Flitwick said.

"Well that is indeed impressive, Filius, but what does Mr. Potter intend to do during your class. I myself was rather bored in transfiguration in school as I was gifted in the art." Dumbledore asked.

"Ah well he asked me for private lessons to hone his talent, Albus. I agreed of course, and I would like for him to read some more advanced books on charms theory while we cover the things in class that he already knows." Flitwick said.

"What books would you like for him to read?" Dumbledore asked.

"I thought Gideon Prewett's Charmed Life and Anton Dolohov's Advanced Charm Theory would be a good place to start." Flitwick said.

"Both those books are in the restricted section! Not to mention one is written by a death eater who currently resides in AZKABAN!" Snape said as he stood up.

"Severus really, the books are quite safe. Their content was thought to be a bit too intense for normal students. As for Dolohov's book, well I can hate what the man did and still respect the research and information in his book. The book is safe as can be and it is the best book to explain the complexities of charms work." Flitwick said defensively.

"I'm tempted to side with Severus on this issue, Filius. Mr. Potter is just a first year after all. I don't want to send the wrong message by giving him access to the restricted section. Some of the books in there are very dangerous." Dumbledore said.

"Well, surely I could arrange something with Madam Pince to pull those books and give them to Mr. Potter. That way he doesn't have access to any book I don't want him have, and he can still read the material. Really, Albus, I know you've read Dolohov's book and you can't tell me it's dangerous in any way." Flitwick said.

"Albus, I would be willing to pull those Books for Filius. If the boy really is gifted, we should provide him with all the means to enhance his abilities." Madam Pince said.

Dumbledore thought on it for a while. "Very well, Filius. If you can find a way to insure Mr. Potter never steps into the restricted section, you may get him those books. I have read Anton's book and you are of course correct that it is harmless. To tell you the truth, I can't say I recall Anton even put a single spell in the book. It was mostly dense theory if I remember correctly." Dumbledore said.

"I still think this is a bad idea, Albus. What if he shows those books to someone else." Snape said.

"They would most likely not understand it, Severus. It's not like we are handing him a book on dark magic. It's a book on theory!" Flitwick said indignity.

"I'm not worried about spells. I'm worried about Potter's big head! The boy already thinks enough of himself without us dolling out special favors to him!" Snape raged.

"Severus have you actually spoken to Mr. Potter? Sure he is confident in his abilities, but I don't see him as the kind of boy who would go and get a big head about it." Flitwick said.

When Flitwick brought up the word confident, Minerva remembered exactly what she wanted to say. Dumbledore saw her stand up and

looking for any excuse to ease the tension between Filius and Severus called on her to speak.

"Albus, Mr. Potter is also gifted in the field of Transfiguration." Minerva said proudly.

With her announcement, everyone stopped speaking to stare at her in disbelief.

"Surely you jest, Minerva!" Dumbledore said astonished.

"I most certainly do not. Much like he did for Filius, Mr. Potter showed amazing aptitude in my class. At first, I thought he was just lazy to be honest. He did not take any notes at all during my lecture and he didn't even raise his wand during the match to pin practical. I was all ready to jump on him when he corrected Mr. Zabbini's style and helped him to achieve the transfiguration. I watched him for a few more minutes and when it became clear that he had no desire to even attempt the spell himself, I demanded that he perform it." McGonagall then reached into her robe pocket and withdrew a single golden pin and placed it on the table.

"He completed the spell without any effort, and much to my amazement his pin was gold." She then passed the pin around to be viewed by the other staff members. When it got to Dumbledore he smiled brightly.

"This is indeed interesting. Is that all, Minerva?" He asked with his twinkle in full blast.

"Oh no, not at all. When I asked him how he did it, he gave me the single greatest explanation of the theory of basic Transfiguration that I've ever heard come out of the mouth of a first year. To be honest, I doubt his answer would have come out of a single one of my seventh years." McGonagall said unable to keep grin from spreading across her face.

"This really is astonishing. I take it he gave you a similar explanation as he did for Filius?" Dumbledore asked.

"Yes, almost word for word including his desire to become a master before he graduates." McGonagall admitted.

"And I take it you were bouncing with excitement at the chance to give him extra lessons?" Dumbledore said knowing that his transfiguration teacher would have been very excited yet probably kept her stoic appearance on the outside.

"I did not bounce, Albus. I did tell him I would provide him with extra lessons should he work hard at them." McGonagall admitted.

"And what will you have Mr. Potter doing during class? I myself know the pains of being bored in Transfiguration." Dumbledore said with a large smile.

"We agreed that he will read the books I assign him on days when he is already aware of the theory. He did not get a chance to practice a lot of transfiguration over the summer, so he will participate in all the practical lessons. If he finishes his practical ahead of everyone else, which I expect him to, he will assist his fellow students for the remainder of the class." Minerva said.

"That is acceptable and what books will you be assigning him?" Dumbledore asked.

"I was thinking about Walter McKnight's Transfiguring my Life and James Prescott's The Big Book of Transfiguration." McGonagall said.

"The Big Book of Transfiguration! Minerva are you mad?!" Severus exclaimed.

"I am quite sane thank you very much, Severus!" McGonagall said sharply causing most of the room including Snape to wince slightly.

"I'm sorry Minerva, but that book contains some rather...dark material. There is a reason after all that only very decorated students in NEWTs transfiguration can check it out." Dumbledore said.

"I have to agree. You are the one after all Minerva who told me under no condition to allow any younger students read that book." Ira Pince said.

"Yes, well this is a special circumstance and it happens to be the single best book to describe the theory of Transfiguration." McGonagall huffed.

"Minerva, if I might suggest a compromise? What if you select what you would like Mr. Potter to read out of that book, and then I lift the anti-copying spell from it so you could copy certain chapters at your discretion. While I agree that it is the best book for Transfiguration theory, it also contains some rather dangerous spells that no first year should ever attempt." Dumbledore said seriously.

"Very well that will be acceptable." McGonagall said.

"Well I must say that Mr. Potter is sure turning out to be quite the little Slytherin." Dumbledore said with a laugh.

Everyone Snape included looked at him like he was mad for a moment.

"Really, Albus, the boy is a Ravenclaw if anything! I mean his thirst for knowledge and honing his talents is just so impressive." Flitwick said.

"No, he should have been a Gryffindor! He explained to me without a hint of intimidation what he was and what he would like to do." McGonagall said.

"Well he's certainly not a Slytherin. I don't have a clue how he even got into my house." Snape said menacingly.

"Oh Severus, I was sure that you of all people would have caught on to why Mr. Potter is such a true Slytherin." Dumbledore said.

When no one said anything, Dumbledore smiled and continued, "Think about it. He purposely placed himself in a situation where both Minerva and Filius first thought little of him only to have him surprise

them, not only with his abilities, but his knowledge about their subjects. He then later used their being impressed with his talents to proposition them for private lessons. I don't want to say the boy manipulated either of you, but he clearly knew what he was doing when he didn't lift a finger to attempt to transfigure his match, Minerva. I don't know if he meant to fall asleep in your class, Filius, but he definitely used the situation to his advantage by levitating your desk. The boy is very cunning and should not be underestimated. He also mentioned to both of you that he wanted to achieve a mastery in your fields before he graduates. Now tell me that isn't the definition of ambitious." Dumbledore paused for a second and then his face broke out into a huge smile. "The boy is such a Slytherin that he even has all of you convinced that he isn't."

Silence met Dumbledore's final words.

"Bloody Hell." Snape said summing up what everyone else was thinking.

A/N1: REMEMBER TO REVIEW!

A/N2: Alright just to clarify. No this chapter is not the end of Harry's first year. Harry's first year goes to chapter 13. I have finished writing to Chapter 13, but I still need to edit the chapters myself as I do not have a BETA for this story. So please do not be expecting an update every day. I also am planning on going back and editing the first few chapters for grammar, misspellings, and anything else I think is off. I hope everyone enjoys this story as I have had a great time writing Harry's first year!

## CHAPTER 8

### HALLOWEEN FIGHTS

Harry was having such a good time at Hogwarts that he hadn't even realized how much time had passed, but sure enough Harry looked up at breakfast one morning and saw several enchanted jack-o-lanterns for Halloween.

Harry's first two months at Hogwarts had been unlike anything he had ever experienced. He was the top student in both Charms and Transfiguration. His private lessons with McGonagall and Flitwick were just amazing. Going into the lessons, Harry thought that he had a good grasp on the basic theory of the arts of Transfiguration and Charms, but he was in fact only at the tip of the iceberg.

The books McGonagall and Flitwick obtained for him from the restricted section opened his eyes to what being a master of the two subjects really meant. The book *Advanced Charm Theory* especially harped on the connection between charms and other aspects of magic including offensive and defensive spells. Likewise, the chapters that Harry read out of *The Big Book of Transfiguration*, described not only in depth Transfiguration theory, but also how a master Transfigurist is among the most difficult duelists to defeat. Harry thought about it and it made perfect sense. If someone can turn anything into a weapon or a shield, it would be harder to defeat them. The fact that his two gifted fields of magic were among the most difficult subjects for most his classmates only made him work harder with Flitwick and McGonagall.

Harry met with Flitwick twice a week and met with McGonagall another two times a week. Needless to say that with Quidditch practice three times a week, Harry was constantly busy. Harry thought back to how different his two private instructors really were when giving his lessons.

::Flashback::

"Welcome Mr. Potter." Flitwick said with his usual excited grin.

"Hello, sir. What are we going to be doing tonight?" Harry asked cheerily.

"Well, I thought that since you already had such an impressive command of the levitation charm, the lighting charm, the silencing charm, and the unlocking and locking charms. We could jump ahead and work on making objects fly. That is if you have read the theory behind it already." Flitwick said.

Harry just grinned. Professor Flitwick knew that all he did in his class was read ahead on theory, but he still always asked.

"Yes sir. I've already read the theory on the subject." Harry said with a smile.

"Very well Mr. Potter. If you will give me a brief synopsis of it, just so I can ensure you are ready." Flitwick said.

Harry again had to repress a chuckle. Lessons with Flitwick were always the same. He asks him if he knows the theory, Harry recites it perfectly. Flitwick smiles, tells him he's correct, and then they get to the fun stuff.

"Well according to Mr. Dolohov, the theory of charming an object to fly is quite different from causing it to levitate. The main difference is that levitation is meant solely for moving an object in a vertical direction. Any attempt to move said object other than directly up or down will result in the charm breaking and the object falling to the ground. Now charming for flight requires a great deal more concentration as the caster has a greater maneuverability with the object. Many people fail at the flying charm because they do not have the focus to keep the object under their control. If the mind wavers, even for a second, the charm will fail and the object would fall to the ground. Mr. Dolohov says that if you constantly focus on the object as well as where you want the object to go, you will have a greater probability of success." Harry said with a smile.

"Excellent as always, Mr. Potter. Now I've got a few quills here that we will be using to start with. If you manage that alright, we'll move on to the shrunk muggle broomsticks on my desk. I understand that

you are quite the flier. I myself was never one for Quidditch, but I think a friendly charmed flying race around the room would be in order if you master the spell tonight.” Flitwick said.

Harry grinned broadly. One of the things he loved about Flitwick was the little incentives or tricks he thought up as a treat if Harry mastered the spell during their sessions.

Harry took out his wand and pointed it at the quill, “volo.” Harry said strongly. His quill immediately floated into the air and Harry moved his wand forward slowly. His charmed quill floated forward at a snails pace.

“Oh bravo, Mr. Potter. Now let’s see if you can get it to move a little faster now.” Flitwick said with a grin.

Harry smiled and focused on moving his quill forward faster. He pushed his wand forward and the quill went forward this time at a bit faster pace.

”Excellent, now try moving it up while still keeping it going forward.” Flitwick instructed.

Harry thought about what it was like on a broomstick to move upwards yes still moving forwards. He pushed his wand forward while arching the tip up slightly. Sure enough, the quill flew forward at an upward angle.

“Excellent, Mr. Potter. Now try to bring it back.” Flitwick said.

Harry did as he was told and pulled his wand back quickly and at a downward angle. It turned out that he pulled back a little too quickly as the quill rocketed backwards and slammed into Flitwicks desk.

“Oh, poor show, Mr. Potter. You need to work on your control a little. Take the next thirty minutes to just play with the quills in the air while I grade some papers in my office. I’ll come back out after the thirty minutes and judge your progress. If you have found a way to control the quills adequately, we’ll have our little race with the shrunken broomsticks.” Flitwick said.

Harry nodded to the tiny professor and set to work controlling his quill while it was in the air. At first, Harry found it rather difficult to move the quill while going forward at any acceptable speed, but after going back and re-reading a passage from Advanced Charm Theory, he was ready to try it again. This time he focused solely on the quill and not his wand. Harry didn't even bother to focus on the subtleties of how hard or fast he moved his wand and in what direction. He focused on the quill and where he wanted it to go. This seemed to be the correct approach as he was soon racing his quill around the room. He was enjoying himself dive-bomb the ground with his quill and zooming it in-between the desks so much that he didn't even hear Flitwick re-enter the room.

"Well Mr. Potter it seems like you figured it out, eh?" Flitwick said.

Harry was so shocked that his professor had snuck up on him that he didn't stop his quill in time, and it smashed into the back wall going as fast as Harry could make it.

"Ouch, well it looks like I will be purchasing some new quills tomorrow." Flitwick said with a grin.

Harry for his part just looked sheepish. He knew he would have to learn how to multitask if he ever wanted to become a master in any magical art.

"Well now, shall we have our race then Harry?" Flitwick said drawing his wand.

Harry just nodded and he pointed his wand at the eight inch broomstick on Flitwick's desk. "Volo." He said as his broom hovered a foot off the desk.

Deciding to show off a little, Harry took his wand and had the broom fly right towards him. When it looked like the broom was going to hit him in the face, Harry twirled his wand in a circular pattern. The broomstick instantly started to circle his head and Harry turned to professor Flitwick.

"Ah bravo Mr. Potter a fine trick. Now I think we will need some sort of start and finish line for our race." Flitwick said as he got up and moved to the center of the room. Harry immediately followed him his broom racing around his head. He watched as Flitwick began to wave his wand around in a large circular pattern

Harry's broom plowed into the back of his head when he saw what Flitwick had done. Flitwick had somehow conjured a massive silver barrier that floated in the air around them. There was about two feet of space between the walls of the classroom and the barrier in every direction. Flitwick flew his broom through the barrier and settled it in the middle between the barrier and the wall. Harry just shook his head and copied him.

"Alright Harry these are the rules. Your broom must stay between the wall and the silver barrier. If you attempt to cross the barrier, you will lose, and believe me I'll know if you try to cross it as it's charmed to catch the brooms on fire if they even touch the barrier. I figure the first person to complete three laps around the classroom wins. Now when I shoot off green sparks from my wand we will start." Flitwick said.

"Er yes sir, but how will you keep the broom floating if you are shooting off green sparks?" Harry asked.

"Ah, excellent question, Mr. Potter. It is possible with enough mental focus to cast another spell while you have another one in place. I dare say you won't be learning how to do it for quite some time, but let me assure you that it is indeed possible. Now, on your mark, get set, GO!" Flitwick said as she shot off green sparks and his broom speed forward.

Caught in awe of Flitwick's explanation and then seeing him do such advanced magic, Harry did not get off to a good start. In fact, Flitwick's broom was already on the first turn when Harry began to move his own broom forward. Harry quickly realized that unless he did something drastic he was not going to win. Flitwick was already on his second lap while he was only done with half of his first. Harry focused as much as he could, but he was still unable to make up any ground.

When Flitwick finished his second lap, Harry got a dreadfully devious idea. He was only slightly ahead of Flitwick and would most likely be lapped again before Flitwick finished the race. Harry intentionally slowed his broom down and watched as Flitwick's broom raced towards his own. He positioned his own broom so that when they made the next turn, Flitwick's broom would be inside of his and closer to the barrier. When Flitwick pulled even with him on the turn, Harry willed his broom to ram Flitwick's. The front of Harry's broom smashed into the center of Flitwick's, and the momentum carried it directly into the charmed barrier. The second Flitwick's broom touched the barrier the broom erupted into flames and fell to the floor. Harry grinned at the shocked look on his professor's face as he finished his final lap without any competition.

"I take it you've never seen someone actively use the barrier to get rid of the competition." Harry said with a smirk as he landed his broom on Flitwick's desk.

"How very Slytherin of you, Mr. Potter." Flitwick commented dryly

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Professor McGonagall's lessons were the exact opposite of professor Flitwick's. While Flitwick allowed for a relaxed and fun atmosphere, McGonagall definitely had a businesslike environment. The way the woman constantly hid her emotions behind a mask of stoicism made Harry constantly question whether the sorting hat should have placed the woman in Slytherin.

"Mr. Potter, today we will be working on changing mice into matchboxes. That is if you have successfully read the theory behind the transfiguration of course." McGonagall said.

Harry grimaced unlike Flitwick, McGonagall just wouldn't accept a slight synopsis of the theory.

"Yes ma'am I have." Harry said dreading what was to come next.

"Very well then, here is a fifteen question short answer test over the theory. You have twenty minutes to complete it. You may begin

whenever.” McGonagall said as she handed him a piece of parchment and a quill.

Harry hated these pointless little mini-exams McGonagall always made him do before the practical. He could explain the theory to her till he was blue in the face, but she always seemed to want him to be able to explain it in writing. What astonished him the most though was that even though he knew the theory backwards and forwards. McGonagall still always found a way to word her questions so that it would usually take him the full twenty minutes to answer them.

When he told Draco and Tonks about this, they laughed for about ten minutes straight. Eventually they composed themselves to ask why he was willingly taking transfiguration tests twice a week.

Harry often asked himself that same question. He would have been at that exact moment if he wasn't so focused on the damn test McGonagall had given him. 'Explain the difference between McKnight's and Prescott's theories on why changing a mouse into a matchbox is different from changing a rat into a matchbox.'

Harry grimaced at the question. It was these comparison questions, which forced him to think outside the box, that made the stupid quizzes take so long. When he finished his quiz, he would hand it to McGonagall and wait. Even Harry had to admit, McGonagall was a most impressive grader. Harry would swear that she was just skimming his answers, but every now and then she would raise her head and ask him to clarify an answer.

When McGonagall was done with her usual inquisition about his answers, she would then explain what they would be doing for the practical portion.

”Now Mr. Potter, you will be turning a mouse into a matchbox today. First and foremost is completing the assignment correctly. If you can do that, which you most certainly should as you have thirty minutes, I want you to take another mouse and try to make the matchbox more elaborate. I will as always be here grading papers should you require any assistance.” McGonagall said strictly.

Harry just shrugged his shoulders and took a mouse out of the cage where McGonagall had them under an immobilization charm. Harry put his mouse on the desk, murmured the incantation, and focused on a matchbox. There was a slight popping sound and the mouse disappeared. Much to Harry's dissatisfaction, his matchbox still contained a short tail.

"Damn." Harry mumbled under his breath.

Harry muttered the counter-spell and proceeded to try again. By his third attempt, he had completely purged his matchbox of any mouse-ish features. He inspected the matchbox for a while before he picked it up and took it to professor McGonagall.

Professor McGonagall eyed the simple brown matchbox carefully for a few moments before setting down on the table. "It's a good start. Now take a few more mice and try to make it more presentable." McGonagall said dismissively.

Harry took three more mice out of the cage and proceeded to turn them into matchboxes. He had to fight his basic instincts, which told him to change the mouse into a matchbox and then make it look better. He had first seen the Gryffindor head's temper when he did that a few lessons prior. It seemed like he had been yelled at for a good twenty minutes before the woman stopped to catch her breath, but he understood the message. Don't take the easy way out on the simple stuff because it will hurt you later on.

So Harry stood over his desk trying to come up with interesting ideas to decorate his matchbox. When Salazar asked about eating one of the mice, Harry got a sudden wave of inspiration. Waving his wand over the nearest mouse, he turned it into a beautiful green matchbox with a black asp on the top. Harry grinned at the box and he began trying to improve it with different mice. McGonagall was adamant that after he completed the first transfiguration that she wanted him to leave all his next copies. Something about wanting to see his thought process. So when she told him to stop after thirty minutes, he had about 20 matchboxes lined up across several desks.

McGonagall approached them and Harry smirked as the woman's eyebrows rose up to her hairline. Even Harry had to admit that he did an excellent job on the final product. His last few matchboxes depicted several snakes surrounding a lion, an eagle, or a badger. The snakes all looked like they were hissing and the other creatures were crouching in fear. Harry couldn't wait till professor Flitwick taught him the animation spell. He would have loved to have made the pictures move to show the snakes attacking the other house mascots.

"Mr. Potter this is exceptional work as always. Although did you have to make my house animal appear so weak?" McGonagall said unable to keep the slight annoyance out of her voice.

"I'm sorry ma'am. I guess I was just thinking about what your house's spirits will be like after we beat you at Quidditch." Harry said smugly.

If there was one thing he learned about professor McGonagall it was that she was a diehard Quidditch fan who bleed for her house. She might put on the act of being neutral most of the time, but Harry always found that bashing the Gryffindor Quidditch team got a rise out of her.

"Really, Mr. Potter? I think that you are a little too cocky. Oliver informs me that Ms. Tonks is coming along at an amazing rate. If what Oliver tells me is true, I might have another Charlie Weasley." McGonagall said just as smugly.

Harry grimaced at the name Weasley. How someone like Ron Weasley could ever be related to his older brothers baffled Harry. Harry was cleaning the trophy room one night for detention and he stumbled upon several awards to a one Bill Weasley. He was Head Boy during his time at Hogwarts as well as one of the most intelligent students to come out of Gryffindor in the last twenty years. He overheard Weasley in transfiguration telling Longbottom that his brother was now a curse breaker for Gringott's Egyptian branch. Weasley's other brother, who was out of school, Charlie, was in fact one of the most decorated Seekers Hogwarts had seen in a long while. General consensus even amongst the Slytherins was that he could have played for England if he didn't go mad chasing Dragons.

Harry pushed the thought of the red haired idiot out of his mind, and focused on baiting McGonagall.

"Well, I knew Tonks would be good. That's why I convinced her to play after all." Harry said as he reveled in breaking McGonagall's stoic facial features for the second time.

"You! You convinced Ms. Tonks to play! Why?" McGonagall asked in shock.

"Well she was really good first of all, and what fun is winning the Quidditch cup if you never have a challenge. Tonks will give me a challenge for at least one match a year." Harry said grinning madly.

"I...I see. Well you certainly have your father's confidence, but I wonder if you had a more altruistic reason for wanting Ms. Tonks to play." McGonagall said as she peered at him through her glasses.

Harry always got slightly unnerved when she did that. It was like she was peaking into his very soul. He often wondered if she wasn't trying to read his mind, but Salazar constantly assured him that she never did. "W...what do you mean?" Harry asked.

"It's no secret that since Ms. Tonks joined the team, she has been teased far less in Gryffindor house. I even saw Oliver making the twins run laps around the castle with their brooms above their head a few days ago. When I asked why he was making them do that, he replied that they were plotting to hit Ms. Tonks with a dungbomb in the library. Oliver seems quite protective of young Ms. Tonks. " McGonagall said.

Harry's eyes narrowed. He didn't like the twins and if they were starting to plot against Tonks again he might have to set them back in their place. Also, the fact that Oliver was taking an interest in Tonks slightly bothered him for some reason, but he rationalized it as Oliver being overprotective of his Seeker. From what Tonks said, he was completely loony about Quidditch. She said that he spent most of his time in class drawing up new plays for them to practice.

“Well I’m glad Tonks isn’t getting teased any more by her housemates. Her stories about what she went through in her first year were one of the reasons I never wanted to be a Gryffindor.” Harry said without thinking.

McGonagall’s face dropped at his last comment, but she quickly recovered. “R...really? You never once wanted to be in Gryffindor house?” She asked tentatively.

“No offense professor, but why would I want to be in a house that had done nothing but ridicule my best friend? Why would I want to be in a house where the students were so stupid that they made fun of Tonks for such an incredibly rare and useful talent like metamorphmagus? No, Gryffindor house was never an option for me.” Harry said.

McGonagall felt her lips tighten. She had a sudden desire to go find the Weasley twins and give them detention for a year for costing her Harry Potter as a member of Gryffindor house. She was brought out of her brooding though when she saw the clock. “Oh Potter, it looks like it’s almost nine o’clock. You had better be off so you get to your dorm before curfew starts.” She said.

“Ok, thank you again for the lesson professor it was great. Oh and feel free to keep the Slytherin matchboxes. I think they’ll look good in your office. You don’t have enough green in there anyway.” Harry said with a grin.

McGonagall for her part just waved her wand and undid all the transfigurations at once. “It appears that is no longer an option, Mr. Potter. Perhaps you should have spoken up sooner.” She said, her lips hinting at a smile.

::End Flashback::

Sadly because Harry was so busy, he didn’t get to do a lot of the things he really would have like to do more of, like getting Weasley in trouble and making Granger’s life miserable. Draco and Harry had thought they had a fool proof way to get Weasley detention for at least a month when they challenged him to midnight duel in the trophy room. Being the stupid Gryffindor, Weasley accepted and

immediately placed Longbottom as his second. Harry was slightly disheartened with his choice. He had a soft spot for Longbottom. The boy never took part in the teasing the other Gryffindor first years liked to try to do to him, and while he was completely useless at most subjects. Harry had to admit that the boy could possibly be gifted just like him, but in Herbology.

The night of the duel, Draco alerted Filch that he overheard some kids were going to be fighting on the third floor near the trophy room. They were so very certain that they would see at least Gryffindor lose 50 house points the next morning, but to their shock they had lost none. Longbottom and Weasley both appeared tired, but otherwise un-phased by the incident. Draco just chalked it up to Filch being completely incompetent, and Harry was forced to agree with him.

Another thing Harry didn't get a lot of time to practice was his Shadow Mage skill. He had only used it once in the castle and that was to avoid Miss Norris one night when his Charms training ran long and Flitwick forgot to give him a note. He still read the diary whenever he could, but he was usually too tired after a night of training or Quidditch practice to really learn the art more.

Harry sat with Draco at the Halloween feast discussing the first Quidditch match, which was to take place the next morning at 11 am. Tonks as usual sat with them although she had been asked by Lee Jordan, a friend of the Weasley Twins, if she would like to sit next to him at the Gryffindor table.

"So Tonks, what do you think your chances are tomorrow?" Draco asked cheekily.

"Oh I dunno, I think once I knock Potter off his broom we'll have a good shot." Tonks replied with an evil smile.

Harry gulped nervously. He and Draco had spied on the Gryffindor practice at Flint's request, and they were a very good team. Draco had actually provided most the notes to Flint about the Gryffindor team. As a reserve Chaser, Draco had the pleasure of going to all the practices, but not play in the games. Truthful most of the Great Hall

pretty much understood that the winner of this game would be the frontrunner for the cup this year.

"Please all of Slytherin knows that Potter is the best flier our house has probably had in the last hundred years." Blaise said with confidence.

"No pressure though right Zabini?" Harry said.

"None at all Potter." Blaise replied with a grin.

Harry was about to respond when Pansy Parkinson sat down talking with Theodore Nott. "I heard that the Gryffindor Mudblood Granger is bawling her eyes out in the lavatory down in the dungeons and won't come out. I wonder what happened. Think someone finally explained that no one wanted her here?" Pansy said with a grin.

Harry just smirked and an atrociously evil idea popped into his head. He dropped his head into his robes and called out, 'Sssalazar do you want to have ssssome fun ssscaring ssssomeone on Halloween?'

'Yesss, of courssse. I have been quite bored lately. The rabbit does not get ssscared of me much anymore.' Salazar hissed back in annoyance.

Harry just smiled at his familiar. Salazar had gotten much more menacingly looking in the last two months. He had grown maybe four or five inches in length, but the normally thin asp had put on a good inch or two in girth. Harry actually had to forcibly restrain his familiar from attacking Draco when Harry had made the mistake of telling him that Draco said he was getting fat.

'Well I'll tell him that you want to eat his eagle owl. Next time he gets sss some mail just ssstare at it menacingly.' Harry put forth.

'That would be excellent massster.' Salazar said.

'Now, there isss a crying girl named Hermione Granger in one of the lavatoriessss in the dungeon. Why don't you go ssshow her why ssshe ssshould cry elsssewhere.' Harry hissed.

'I will leave immediately.' Salazar said as he uncoiled himself from around Harry's chest.

Harry took his head out from under his robes and all his friends immediately took notice of the sick smile that was plastered on his face.

"Oh Harry, what are you up too?" Tonks asked hesitantly.

"Me? Nothing." Harry replied with a grin, but the screams of several fourth years seeing Salazar as they entered the hall made Tonks, Draco, and Blaise scrutinize him further.

"Harry, you and Salazar are never apart unless he's hunting, and I know for a fact that he got into McGonagall's mice crate yesterday because she was ranting about it today in class. So there is no way that snake could possibly be hungry." Tonks said.

"Well then I guess you can say that I just sent him off for a bit of Halloween fun." Harry said.

"Fun for who, Harry?" Blaise asked

Harry was saved from responding though when a completely flustered looking Quirrell ran into the Great Hall completely out of breath. He stopped and said, "Troll in the Dungeons," before passing out cold.

It took a full second count before pandemonium erupted in the Great Hall. It took several loud bangs out of Professor Dumbledore's wand to get everyone to be silent. "PREFECTS LEAD YOUR HOUSE'S TO YOUR RESPECTED COMMON ROOMS!" Dumbledore said loudly.

Harry, Draco, and Blaise quickly got up and joined the end of a long line of Slytherins heading towards the Dungeons. Tonks got up and followed a group of sixth year Gryffindors being led by Percy Weasley.

"I wonder how a troll got in? Aren't they supposed to be really stupid?" Blaise asked.

"Yeah, father said that they can't even figure out how to use doors." Draco replied.

Harry was about to respond when he heard something that made his blood run cold.

'Sssstay away from me you ugly beassst.'

Harry stopped walking instantly. Draco and Blaise stopped as well when they realized that Harry was just staring down a corridor. Then they heard the slight hissing that was echoing through the halls.

"Salazar's in trouble." Harry said as he sprinted down the corridor.

Blaise looked like he wanted to know exactly how Harry knew that, but stifled his question and followed Draco and Harry down the corridor.

Harry heard the hissing get louder and louder until he noticed it was coming from a bathroom. Harry ran into through the open door, but a second later wished he hadn't. Standing not ten feet away from him was a twelve foot tall mountain troll. Harry then noticed that there were two other individuals in the room. Crumpled against the far wall was a terrified looking Hermione Granger and leaping across the bathroom to avoid the troll's club was his very own familiar.

'Massster this beassst will not die! I have bitten him ssseveral times, but hissss ssskin issss too thick.' Salazar hissed as he continued dodging the enraged troll.

'Continue to avoid the beassst, Sssalazar. I will do ssssomething.' Harry hissed.

Harry heard a gasp come from behind him. He turned around his wand draw only to see Blaise and Draco. Blaise looked like he was about to go into shock.

"P...Potter you're a Parseltongue!" He shouted in shock.

This clearly was a stupid thing to do as the troll immediately turned around to address the noise that was coming from his back. Harry's mind was racing. Oh Merlin what am I going to do? How am I going to defeat a bloody Troll.

Harry was forcibly snapped out of his thoughts when he had to dive to avoid the troll's club, which obliterated one of the bathroom sinks. When the troll raised his club to attack again, Harry shouted the first spell he thought of, "Wingardium Leviosa!"

The troll's club rose out of his grip and floated a few feet above him. The troll stupidly looked up to see what happen to his club. When he raised his head, Harry brought the club down as fast as he could. Everyone in the room heard the resulting CRACK of the club meeting the Troll's skull. The troll immediately keeled over as green blood poured from its head.

"Merlin, Potter you just knocked out a bloody mountain Troll with its own club!" Blaise said in shock.

'Thank you, Massster. I would not have been able to continue avoiding that foul beassst much longer.' Salazar hissed.

Accepting that everyone in the room now knew he was a Parseltongue, Harry responded, 'It wasss nothing you would not have done for me my friend. Thisss has been a very interessting night.'

The sound of several sharp intakes of breath from behind him caused Harry to turn around quickly. He mentally slapped himself. Standing in the doorway were Professors Dumbledore, McGonagall, Snape, and Quirrell.

"Mr. Potter...you...you are a....you are a...." McGonagall said in disbelief.

"Parseltonuge. Yes ma'am." Harry said finishing her thought.

Harry looked at the faces of the four teachers. Dumbledore looked pensive. McGonagall was in complete shock. Snape appeared to be in disbelief. The strangest though was Quirrell. For a moment, the

man's scared and fearful nature was replaced by what appeared to be confusion and deep contemplation. A moment later though the look was gone and Quirrell's usual frightened self was back.

"What happened here, Potter!" Snape said though not as menacingly as he probably would have wanted.

"Er...well you see Draco, Blaise, and I were on our way back to the common room. While we were passing the hallway of this corridor I heard Salazar in distress. I ran off to see what was wrong. Needless to say, I didn't expect my familiar to be dodging a full grown mountain Troll. Salazar told me that he had bitten the Troll several times, but the creature's skin appeared to be too thick for his venom to penetrate. Blaise and Draco must have followed me because they entered the room a little later. The Troll noticed us and it tried to attack. It destroyed that sink with its club and when it made to attack again I used the levitation charm to knock it out with its own club." Harry said.

The four professors exchanged shocked looks. "Miss Granger is that true?" McGonagall asked.

Hermione for her part just looked like she wanted to do nothing more than go to bed and cry. Still she nodded her head to acknowledge that this was what happened.

"I don't understand how did the Troll get into the bathroom with Miss Granger?" Dumbledore said.

Hermione just pointed at one of the stalls.

Snape looked at the stall for a moment before sending a spell that dissolved the door.

Harry moaned when he looked inside. Weasley and Longbottom were standing on the loo holding each other in fear.

"So I take it that these two brave Gryffindors were the ones to put the Troll in here?" Snape said with an evil glint in his eyes.

Hermione simply nodded numbly.

Ron seemed to gather his wits the quickest. "EXPEL HIM!" He shouted pointing at Harry.

Everyone just stared at the red haired Gryffindor like he was mad.

"Why would we be expelling Mr. Potter, Weasley. You on the other hand..." Snape said.

"HE'S A BLOODY PARSELTONUGE! THAT PROVES HE'S A DARK WIZARD!" Ron screamed.

"Harry." Draco whispered.

Harry leaned in to speak with his friend. "Yes, Draco." Harry replied.

"It would be best if no one found out that you were a Parseltonuge, Harry." Draco said.

"I know, but what can I do. That stupid Gryffindor is going to go blabbing the moment he's out of here." Harry said vehemently.

"Harry you saved their lives when you took out that Troll. How long would it have taken for it to have killed Granger and then destroyed the bathroom. Trolls are stupid, but they have a great sense of smell. It would have found Longbottom and Weasley." Draco said.

"Ok so I saved their lives what's your point?" Harry asked.

"Call in a life debt." Draco whispered fiercely.

"A life debt?" Harry asked.

Draco rolled his eyes, "Potter, I'm getting you a book on wizarding customs for Christmas and I expect you to read it cover to cover. When a wizard saves another wizard or witch's life, they can request something of the wizard he saved. If the Wizard or Witch refuses or breaks the oath he took, magic itself will kill him or her." Draco said.

Harry grinned, "Thanks Draco I owe you one for this."

Draco just waved him off, "The look on Weasley's face will be enough."

Harry turned his attention back to the professors who were proceeding to rip Longbottom and Weasley apart.

"What did we miss?" Draco asked Blaise.

"Well it appears that Weasley being the Genius that he is, was the reason Granger was crying in the first place. Longbottom guilt tripped him into finding her and warning her about the Troll. They stumbled upon it in this bathroom and locked it in. When they were about to go find a teacher they heard Hermione scream and realized what they did. They opened the door and tried to cast a few spells, but all they got were sparks. The Troll didn't even notice them because he was dealing with Salazar. So they tried to get Granger out of the room, but they claim she was frozen in fear. The two brave and courageous Gryffindors proceeded to abandon her where she was, and hid in the stall." Blaise said with a grin.

Harry and Draco both cracked huge grins and Harry began listening to the professors berate the two boys.

"Mr. Weasley, Mr. Longbottom! I have never seen such horrendous and stupid behavior in all my time. I will be sending notes to both Molly and Augusta informing them of your little stunt!" McGonagall raged.

"30 points each from Gryffindor for blatant stupidity as well." Snape said with a vicious grin.

"Also, both of you will serve a detention with Hagrid tomorrow after the Quidditch match." Dumbledore said although he looked like he didn't want to give out any punishment.

"Oh and another 10 points from you Mr. Weasley for insulting Ms. Granger earlier today! I don't know what you said, but if it was bad enough for her to spend the entire feast crying in the bathroom it

must have been something terrible.” McGonagall said darkly as if daring the boy to argue with her.

Harry decided to throw himself into the conversation. “Excuse me, professors?”

The four teachers whirled around as if they had forgotten that Draco, Blaise, and Harry were still in the room. Harry had Salazar lying loosely around his shoulders. All four of the teachers seemed a bit hesitant to deal with him now that they knew he was a parseltonuge.

“Yes Potter.” Snape said hesitantly.

“Well sir, I think that we can all agree that it would be rather bad for me if the school found out I was a parseltonuge. I’m aware after all of its reputation, Weasley’s little outburst notwithstanding.” Harry said.

“Harry, I can understand your hesitancy, but I will not place a memory charm on any of my students if that is what you are asking.” Dumbledore said strongly.

“Yeah Potter! By tomorrow the entire school will know that you are in fact a dark wizard!” Weasley barked.

“Detention for one week, Weasley.” The four professors said at once.

Ron looked like he had been slapped twenty ways from Sunday.

“But, but everyone knows that...” Ron stuttered.

“You really are a complete idiot, Weasley. Parseltonuge is just a talent some wizards possess. Just because you are too stupid to believe rumors does not make it fact.” Snape spat out.

“Well professor. I hope you can understand why this is necessary. I just don’t feel like having every member of the school thinking I’m some dark, evil wizard. So in order to insure that no one finds out about this, I’m calling in a life debt on Weasley, Longbottom, and Granger.” Harry said with a tone of finality.

The four teachers looked on in shock.

"Surely you can't be serious, Mr. Potter." McGonagall said.

"Harry they are just three eleven year olds." Dumbledore said.

Harry noticed that Snape looked hesitant, but again Quirrell seemed to be the odd one. For a second, Harry could have sworn that his face showed amusement.

"Well I'm sorry professors, but my mind is made up. Draco how do I go about calling out the life debt?" Harry asked.

"Er...well you just raise your wand say your name and say that you invoke the magic of a life debt against Ron Weasley, Neville Longbottom, and Hermione Granger. You then say what you expect of them. At the end, just say so mote it be. If you do it right, there should be a flare of magic that we will all feel." Draco said.

Harry nodded and raised his wand, "I Harry James Potter invoke the magic of a life debt against Ronald Weasley, Neville Longbottom, and Hermione Granger. I demand that they never make mention of my having the gift of Parseltonuge in any way. Be it written, Spoken, or eluded too, until I myself acknowledge it publicly. So mote it be."

There was a second before everyone in the room felt a hot flash of magic shoot through them.

"Harry was that really necessary." Dumbledore asked.

"Yes because now I know if anyone finds out about my Parseltonuge there will either be a dead body in Gryffindor tower or it will have been one of your four or Blaise, who will be keeping his mouth shut. Right Blaise?." Harry said darkly.

"Y-yea, Harry." Blaise said quickly.

Dumbledore sighed, "Very well Mr. Potter. You and your friends are excused to go finish the feast back in the Slytherin Common Room."

"Wait headmaster, surely Slytherin house deserves some points. I mean Potter did defeat a full grown Mountain Troll by himself while the three brave Gryffindors in the room cowered in fear." Snape said while looking at McGonagall right in the eyes.

"I guess you are correct Severus, Mr. Potter take 20 points for pure nerve and another 10 for keeping your head to realize that such a simple charm would be able to knock out a Troll." Dumbledore said with an air of finality.

The three Slytherin first years smirked at Weasley as they left the bathroom.

"I can't believe it, only thirty points. You knocked out a troll. What does someone have to do to get Dumbledore to fork over fifty points." Draco said in annoyance as they stepped into the Slytherin common room. On the far side of the room, there was a large table filled with food. Harry was about to grab a plate when he heard someone scream.

"POTTER WHERE IN MERLIN'S NAME WERE YOU AND MALFOY!"

Harry and Draco turned around to see a very unhappy Marcus Flint striding towards them.

"Where in blazes have you two been! I sent those two idiots Crabbe and Goyle to look for you twenty minutes ago! We have a game tomorrow and I don't need you two gallivanting around the castle, especially not with a troll out there!" Flint roared drawing the attention of the entire common room.

"Well you don't have to worry about the troll anymore." Draco drawled with a grin.

Everyone in the common room got quite and looked at them. "So Dumbledore found it then?" Flint asked bored.

"Nope, Harry knocked it out with its own club in one of the girl's lavatories." Blaise said honestly.

The sight of the entire Slytherin common room staring at him with disbelief was enough to make Harry blush scarlet.

"P...Potter is that true?" Flint asked hesitantly.

"Well...er...yes it is. I mean Salazar was trapped in the bathroom with the Troll and I had to stop it from hurting him so I..." Harry said.

"I SWEAR TO MERLIN POTTER IF YOU EVER TRY TO ATTACK A TROLL THE NIGHT BEFORE A MATCH AGAIN, I WILL STRING YOU UPSIDE DOWN NAKED FROM THE ASTRONOMY TOWER!" Flint roared.

"Er well I'm sorry..." Harry said.

"SORRY! SORRY WOULDN'T DO US ANY GOOD IF YOU GOT HURT! YOU'RE OUR SEEKER MAN! WAKE UP! NOW BOTH YOU AND MALFOY GET SOME FOOD AND GO TO SLEEP. AND MERLIN HELP YOU IF YOU DON'T CATCH THAT BLASTED SNITCH TOMORROW!" Flint screamed.

Harry and Draco immediately took off to grab some food. Blaise followed them laughing.

QUIDDITCH PITCH, HOGWARTS

"WELCOME WITCHES AND WIZARDS TO THE FIRST QUIDDICH MATCH OF THE YEAR! TODAY THE NOBLE LIONS OF GRYFFINDOR FACE THE TREACHEROUS SNAKES OF SLYTHERIN..."

"JORDAN!" McGonagall shouted.

"SORRY PROFESSOR... I'M LEE JORDAN, EVERYONE, AND I WILL BE YOUR COMMENTATOR FOR THIS YEARS QUIDDITCH GAMES." Lee Jordan's magically enchanted voice echoed through the stadium.

"HERE COME THE GRYFFINDORS LED BY TEAM CAPTAIN OLIVER WOOD AT KEEPER. ANGELINA JOHNSON, KATIE BELL,

AND ALICIA SPINET ARE THE CHASERS. THE HUMAN BLUDGERS, THE WEASLEY TWINS, ARE THE BEATERS. AND AT SEEKER THE LOVELY, THE STUNNING, THE WOMAN WITH THE FIRST NAME I DARE NOT MUTTER FOR FEAR OF MY LIFE, TOOONKS!" Lee Jordan said.

"NOW ENTERING THE PITCH FROM THE SOUTH ARE THE SLYTHERINS LED BY CAPTAIN MARCUS FLINT AT CHASER ALONG WITH MICHAEL MONTEGUE AND ALEX PUCEY. JAMES WARRINGTON IS THE KEEPER. THE BEATERS ARE ALLAN BOLE AND DANNIEL DERIK. AND AT SEEKER IS THE INFAMOUS, THE FEARED, THE INDIMIDATING SLAYER OF THE DARK LORD HAAARY POOOTER!" Jordan said.

Harry just shook his head at his introduction. He flew down to the ground along with the rest of the Slytherin team. He spotted Tonks and he certainly didn't like the venomous look she was shooting him as they lined up behind their respected captains. Something told him that this was not going to be a friendly game between two best friends. He recalled Flint's encouraging pre-game speech as it consisted of five sentences.

"We will win. We will dominate. We will slaughter them. How do I know? Because if we don't, I will curse every last one of you in your sleep."

Harry snapped back into reality when Madam Hooch told them all to get on their brooms. Harry straddled his Nimbus 2000 and on Madam Hooch's whistle he shot into the air. He got about twenty feet up when both Weasley twins rammed into his causing the first foul of the game.

Harry just shook his head. He knew there was no love lost between Gryffindor and Slytherin, but clearly the fact that Gryffindor had lost 70 points last night when Harry took care of the Troll stung their pride. The fact that Snape said loudly at breakfast that Weasley and Longbottom abandoned Granger to the Troll must have really not sat well with the Gryffindors. Clearly as the slayer of the Troll, the twins were going to take out their frustration on him.

“AND IT’S BELL WITH THE QUAFFLE. BELL WAS ONLY A RESERVE LAST YEAR FOR WOOD AND SHE APPEARS TO BE EXCELLENT FIND, AND A QUITE ATTRACTIVE YOUNG GIRL IF I SAY SO MY...”

”JORDAN!” McGonagall threatened.

“SORRY PROFESSOR, SO IT’S BELL TO JOHNSON BACK TO SPINET. OH INTERCEPTED BY FLINT WHO PASSES TO MONTAGUE WHO PASSES BACK TO FLINT HE SHOOT. SAVE BY THE GRYFFIDOR KEEPER WOOD. WOOD PASSES IT OFF TO SPINET WHO TAKES OFF. SHE DODGES A BLUDGER FROM THE SLYTHERIN BEATER BOLE. SHE PASSES TO JOHNSON WHO SHOOT. WARRINGTON DIVES, HE MISSES 10-0 GRYFFINDOR!” Jordan screamed.

When Johnson scored, three fourths of the stadium erupted into cheers while the other fourth booed and hissed. Harry was currently circling the pitch like an eagle looking for the snitch. So far he hadn’t had a lot to do. He dodged a few rogue bludgers that came close to him, but he had not seen a hint of the snitch yet. Out of the corner of his eye he saw Tonks marking him slightly. He noticed that she seemed more focused on staring daggers at the back of his head then searching for the snitch.

Harry wasn’t sure exactly why Tonks was mad at him, but he put it to the back of his mind as he searched for the snitch.

After another Gryffindor goal making the score 60-20 Gryffindor, Harry saw a flash of gold near the Gryffindor keeper. Harry knew his broom was faster then Tonks’ and he tore off to the other side of the field. Tonks hesitated a second before giving chase.

“AND IT LOOKS LIKE POTTER’S SPOTTED THE SNITCH! TONKS IS ABOUT TEN METERS BEHIND HIM AS HE ROCKETS TOWARDS THE GRYFFINDOR KEEPER WOOD. POTTER’S GOT HIS HAND OUT, HE’S...OUCH THAT’S GOT TO HURT! STRUCK BY A BLUDGER IN THE WRIST BY GRYFFINDOR BEATER GEORGE OR FRED WEASLEY, CAN’T TELL WHICH ONE FROM HERE. GOOD HIT BY THE GRYFFINDOR BEATER REGARDLESS

AND IT LOOKS LIKE IN THE CONFUSSION THE SNITCH HAS DISAPEARED AGAIN." Lee Jordan shouted.

Harry was fuming. His right wrist was broken. He had enough broken bones with his time at the Dursley's to know what it felt like. Harry made a mental note to put hexing the Weasley twins on his top ten list of things to do.

Harry was clutching his wrist when Tonks flew up next to him. "Well I guess what they say about karma coming around to bite you is true." She said menacingly.

"What's your problem, Tonks." Harry barked back. He didn't think she was one to let a game affect her so much.

"You know why I'm upset, Potter!" Tonks snarled.

"No I don't. I mean I understand getting all pumped up for a match, but you seem to actually be mad at me for something. If it's about the Troll last night I'm sorry, but it's not like I planned on meeting a Troll when I heard Salazar in distress." Harry said.

"Oh sod it Potter, you know very well why I'm upset!" Tonks screamed just inches from his face.

"No. I. Don't!" Harry yelled back just as forcefully."

Tonks was about to respond when two bludgers shot out towards both of them. The two seekers quickly stopped their argument and began searching for the snitch again.

When Gryffindor scored again making the score 120-40, Flint called time out. Harry flew to the ground where the team was huddled.

"This is not acceptable! Montague if you drop the Quaffle one more time I'm going to remove your hands later tonight. Warrington do you think you can stop at least one shot from those stupid Gryffindor bitches! Bole, Derik take your heads out of your arses and keep those Bludgers away from us. POTTER CATCH THAT DAMN SNITCH

NOW!" Flint roared as Madam Hooch signaled for them to take back to the air.

Harry was now flying around the pitch as fast as he could looking for the snitch. When Gryffindor scored to go up 190-50, Harry spotted the snitch near the ground. He saw that Tonks spotted it as well and the two seekers went into a suicidal dive for it. Tonks had the better angle, but Harry was pushing his broom to go full speed. The two seekers seemed to reach the snitch at the same exact moment. They both had their hands out to catch the little ball when the snitch shot about two feet straight up. They both pulled up as fast as they could. Tonks recovered first and was about to clinch a humiliating loss for Slytherin when Harry leapt off of his broom and made a wild grab for the little ball. He caught the snitch in his good hand and fell ten feet to the ground. His body crumbled underneath him and he was sure that he must have at least fractured one of his legs from the fall, but the little gold ball was secure in his hand. The final score was 200-190. Slytherin had by some miracle pulled out a victory over their hated rival.

The Slytherin team quickly landed around Harry as the Slytherin stands erupted into cheers. Tonks flew to the ground a few feet away. Harry saw that even though she still looked mad at him that she seemed to want to make sure that he was alright. Harry just mouthed, 'I'll be fine' to her. She nodded and took off towards the Gryffindor changing room.

Professor Flitwick arrived a few moments later. He stunned Harry, so that he could levitate him to the hospital wing.

Madam Pomfrey fixed his broken wrist and fractured legs in a matter of moments. Harry was walking back to the Slytherin common room with a huge grin plastered all over his face when someone called his name.

He turned around and saw Tonks standing a few feet away. Harry sighed, it looked like they were going to finish their argument now.

"Ok Tonks please tell me what I did because I have no clue." Harry said throwing his hands up in frustration.

Tonks just shook her head sadly, "Harry, why did you send Salazar to scare Hermione?"

Harry was taken aback by the question. Of all the things she could have been mad at him for, he was not expecting that. Maybe that's why he only managed to say, "You're mad at me for that."

Harry's response only seemed to infuriate Tonks. "DAMN IT HARRY! Why did you send Salazar to scare Hermione. You knew she was crying and upset about something, and you took it upon yourself to make her feel worse!"

Harry was taken by surprise at the anger Tonks seemed to have for him. "Tonks, what does it matter? I mean...."

"WHAT DOES IT MATTER! Harry why do you hate her? I've been talking to her the last few weeks in the common room. Hell I'm the only person who will. She's so alone Harry. All of Gryffindor shuns her because she's really studious. I don't think she has a single friend in this entire school. Now why did you take it upon yourself to compound her suffering?" Tonks demanded.

"Tonks, she's a muggleborn! Not to mention the fact that..."

"Oh sod that, Potter! You told me that you didn't have a single friend in primary school. How your cousin would constantly pick on you. Hell before I met you I had no one either. We both know what it's like to be alone. So why are you going out of your way to make Hermione feel worse!" Tonks said.

Harry's face must have shown his shock because Tonks just rolled her eyes at him.

"You know what, Harry, I didn't mind you hexing the twins, or telling Hermione off on the train. Hell, I've spent most of my time in Gryffindor this year defending you to everyone who bad mouthed you, but I won't be your friend much longer if you turn into some prick who actually enjoys making a crying girl more sad, lonely, and depressed!" Tonks said as she stormed off.

Harry stood rooted to the spot in the Dungeons. He couldn't believe Tonks' reaction. Why did she care about the stupid muggleborn to begin with? Harry opened the door to an empty potions classroom and walked inside. He stayed up late thinking about what he should do about Tonks, and why he hated Granger so much. He slept in that classroom that night as his housemates partied not 50 feet from where he was.

A/N1: REMEMBER TO REVIEW!

A/N2: This is an Early 4th of July present to all my readers. I hope that you all liked the way I tried to stay close to the canon, yet kept the plot original.

A/N3: Yes, I know I left out the jinxed broom, I did that intentionally. You are of course welcome to guess why, but it will be revealed in chapter 12 in case you are wondering.

## Chapter 9

### Christmas

The month of November past by slowly and painfully for Harry and before he realized it Christmas break was fast approaching. After his argument with Tonks, Harry reflected on why he hated Hermione Granger. He came up with a simple reason. She was a link to a world he wanted to forget. The fact was, she was the only person Harry knew for certain was muggleborn at Hogwarts. He wasn't a fool, he knew that there were others, but as long as he didn't know for sure, he could pretend that they didn't exist. Harry could not forgive his relatives for the pain they forced upon him, and he could not forgive the muggles that either stuck their nose up at him in Primary school or beat him up with Dudley. So he hated Hermione Granger, the stupid muggleborn witch, who was the link back to that world.

Harry wasn't naïve he knew that Granger probably knew just as much as he did about the wizarding world, but it didn't change the fact that he should have grown up in it. Dumbledore took away growing up in the wizarding world from him when he was put with the Dursleys. Hermione Granger and the other Muggleborns were just trespassing. Muggles had their own world, a world that hated him, a world that treated him like dirt. Why couldn't she just stay in that world?

So Harry decided that he would not apologize to Hermione, and he told Tonks just that. Unfortunately Tonks hadn't taken the news well, and they hadn't spoken since.

It was now the fifteenth of December and the express would be bringing kids home for the holidays in the morning. It disgusted Harry how Tonks could just choose some muggle born over him. She was his first friend, his best friend. She knew all his secrets, she knew his past, she was supposed to understand, she was supposed to stand by him. Instead she sat at the Gryffindor table with the stupid mudblood, Lee Jordan, and Oliver Wood.

Mudblood. That was the word that Draco taught him to describe muggleborn witches and wizards. Draco said it meant that they were dirtying up the wizarding gene pool with their filthy blood. Harry really didn't care about that, he didn't care that they were 'dirtying the blood'

as Draco said. He just needed a word to describe his hatred of them and it worked.

“Harry?” Draco asked snapping Harry out of his anger.

”What!” Harry said sharply still staring at Tonks who was now laughing. The sight of her laughing, seemingly having a great time with the very same people who once treated her like crap infuriated Harry. They wouldn’t even be speaking to her if it wasn’t for me! If I hadn’t befriended her and told her to play Quidditch, she’d be sitting by herself! She should be sitting next to me! She was my friend! I treated her like an equal while those pricks just ridiculed her!

“Harry, I really am getting sick of this. I’ve spoken to both you and Tonks and neither of you will tell me what you’re fighting about. Can I just assume that it’s your fault and tell you to apologize so everything goes back to normal?” Draco asked.

Harry snarled and glared at Draco. “This is between me and your cousin, Draco. I’m right and she’s just being stupid and refusing to look at it from my perspective! If she knew anything about me at all, then we wouldn’t be having this problem.” Harry said louder then he probably should have as several Slytherins looked at him with raised eyebrows.

”Well I’m telling you to end it, Harry! I mean you’ve been miserable this last month! Flint’s constantly yelling at you at Quidditch practice, but it’s like you don’t care. The only reason I think you’re even still on the team is because you saved his ass last game and there isn’t anyone better to replace you.” Draco said vehemently.

Harry just shrugged his shoulders in indifference, but inside he knew Draco was right. McGonagall and Flitwick had both spoken to him about his recent performance in their private lessons. Surprisingly it was McGonagall that gave him the heart to heart though.

::Flashback::

”Ah Mr. Potter, please sit down.” McGonagall said.

Harry walked up to the lone desk in front of her and took a seat.

"Mr. Potter I'm going to be blunt. Your progress recently has not been up to your usual standards. While you seem to be able to still do exceptional in the practical, your test scores on the theory have been going down. I want you to know that if you do not improve and snap out of this funk, I will reconsider our lessons." McGonagall said.

Harry felt his heart leap into his throat, and then a deep rage struck him. This is all that damn Mudblood's fault.

"Mr. Potter is everything alright with you personally?" McGonagall asked softly.

Harry was thrown with his usually stern professor's suddenly soft demeanor. "Er...yes ma'am everything is fine." Harry lied.

"I noticed that Ms. Tonks has rejoined the Gryffindor table." McGonagall said knowingly.

"So." Harry said darkly.

"Mr. Potter, it doesn't take a genius to figure out that you two have had a rather large fight and are not speaking. Her performance has slipped in her classes this month as well. Not surprisingly the drop occurred at roughly the same time as your own." McGonagall said honestly.

Harry just shrugged his shoulders and attempted to appear nonchalant about the whole situation.

"Oh stop being such a blasted Slytherin, Mr. Potter. Everyone who knows you can see right through that I don't care attitude you seem to be projecting to the entire world. Now I want to know what happened. Surely you two can fix it. I've never seen two students in different years come to Hogwarts and have the close friendship that you and Ms. Tonks had. Now Mr. Potter what happened? This isn't about you beating her to the snitch is it?" McGonagall asked.

"Please professor Tonks isn't that shallow and besides the entire school knew I was going to catch the snitch." Harry said.

"Well, if it isn't the cocky Quidditch star. It has been a while since I've spoken to you, but you aren't going to distract me with Quidditch, Mr. Potter. I'm concerned for the both of you. Ms. Tonks was top in her year at both defense and charms. She was also among my best second year transfiguration students. So please if you will just be curt with me and tell me what this stupid fight you two are having is about." McGonagall said.

"I'm sorry ma'am, but I could explain it to you till I was blue in the face and there would be nothing you could do about it. Tonks just refuses to look at the situation from my perspective. I really hope this isn't the end of our friendship because I miss her ma'am, I really do, but she just won't budge." Harry said sadly.

"I see. Well I am sorry to hear that Mr. Potter because until you and Miss Tonks resolve this little issue. I will be canceling our private lessons. I will see you in class on Monday, you are excused." McGonagall said sadly.

Harry could tell that she didn't want to have to cancel the lessons. While he was struggling with his lessons, he was still getting them done and improving. This was just her trump card, her final ploy at trying to get Tonks and him back as friends. A large part of Harry respected his professor for caring for her students so much. Maybe it was because of that, that Harry didn't fight her. He didn't yell, scream, or complain. He just gathered his books and left the room.

::End Flashback::

That was two weeks ago and Harry and Tonks still hadn't spoken. He caught McGonagall's eye up at the staff table and the two exchanged pained looks. Harry new that she had grown quite fond of their private lessons, in fact, Harry thought it might have been harder on her then it was on him to stop them.

Harry tore his eyes from his Transfiguration teacher and gazed again at Tonks at the Gryffindor table. This wasn't how it was suppose to be.

They were supposed to be best friends getting ready for Christmas. Harry felt a slight tear begin to form around his eye. This should have been his first happy Christmas. He wanted to go back with Tonks to her house and celebrate with her mum, but with the two of them on the outs he didn't dare even thinking about that. He might have been mad at her, but he still cared for her as a friend, and he wasn't going to ruin her Christmas with his presence.

Harry had gotten Tonks' gift a few days before Halloween. Draco let him use his eagle owl so that he could order it. It was currently sitting underneath the Slytherin table waiting to get mailed later that day. At the time he had been so excited, the thought of a real Christmas was almost surreal to him. He should have figured that something would come and bollocks it up for him.

Draco had broached the subject of him coming to Malfoy Manor with him a few days ago.

::Flashback::

"Harry you with us mate?" Draco asked after a particularly bad Quidditch practice.

"What's that?" Harry asked.

Draco sighed, "I asked if you would like to come spend Christmas at Malfoy Manor? Father wrote a few days ago and said it would be fine."

Harry thought about it for a long time. On one hand he liked Malfoy Manor, and he certainly didn't want to upset Lucius or Narcissa, they were like a real aunt and uncle to him. However, he just couldn't bring himself to go. He didn't want to ruin their holiday spirit with his depressing mood. Truthfully, during the first week of December with he and Tonks still on the outs, Harry decided that he was going to have a lonely Christmas alone in the Slytherin common room. Hell he was the first and only person to sign up on the list of students who would be staying at the castle from Slytherin house.

"No, tell you father I really do appreciate the offer, but...but I'd like to stay at Hogwarts and...and you know practice magic and stuff. You understand right?" Harry asked hopefully.

Draco looked crestfallen, "Yeah, I understand Harry. It's a pity because Tonks is coming for Christmas dinner."

Harry's eyes almost popped out of his head. "Tonks is going to the manor for Christmas when did this happen? Can you give her a note for me? If I came, do you think she'd talk to me?" Harry asked quickly.

"Harry, Tonks isn't coming to the manor. Think about what her mum would say. I just wanted to see if you really wanted to stay at Hogwarts or if you were hoping to be spending Christmas somewhere else." Draco said sadly.

"Oh crap. Draco I'm so sorry. You know I think of your dad and mum like an aunt and uncle. Its just...its just..." Harry said.

"No Harry, I understand. Tonks is your best friend. I don't know what Christmas was like for you at your relatives, but I'd bet my entire trust vault that it wasn't exactly filled with sherry and giggles. If anyone deserves to do what they want for Christmas, it's you, and if you'd rather stay at Hogwarts because you are sad about Tonks, I understand." Draco said maturely.

"Thanks." Harry said relieved that he wasn't about to get into a row with his other best friend.

::End Flashback::

"So Potter, got mischief planned for the break? I mean if I had the entire common room to myself for three weeks..." Blaise said as several Slytherins quickly turned their heads to make sure Harry didn't plan on blowing up their common room.

"Well I have a few special projects I wanted to work on to be honest." Harry said.

For once, Harry was being one hundred and ten percent truthful. He figured if he was going to be spending Christmas alone with most the school gone, he could practice his Shadow Mage skill, and start his investigation into why his mother was placed in an orphanage. He figured with all the teachers at Hogwarts, he might be able to sucker some information out of them about Dumbledore's past. He'd already looked into several books on the man, but they contained very little about his family more on his great deeds.

Finding out exactly what Dumbledore did and didn't know about his relationship to him had been something Harry had been thinking about looking into for some time. If the old man did know about their connection, then he was guiltier than anyone else for his parents death. Dumbledore could have raised his mother, maybe given her training. Hell everyone told him that Dumbledore was the only one Voldemort feared surely he could have trained his great granddaughter to defend herself better than the defense teachers. More personally for Harry though, if Dumbledore knew about their connection, then he was guilty for abandoning him to the Dursleys. If the man truly didn't know though, then...well Harry didn't know what he would do. He couldn't exactly see himself calling possibly the strongest wizard in the world Pappy Albus or anything.

Harry's final project was a lot simpler; he was going to practice spells. When McGonagall cancelled their training, Harry found himself bored two nights a week. He quickly got into the habit of living in the library those two nights a week reading books on dueling and offensive and defensive magic. Harry knew he wanted to be powerful, and he wasn't humble enough to think that that he couldn't achieve it. He knew his talents were impressive. Being gifted in two magical arts was a statistical improbability. That raw ability combined with his Shadow Mage, Parseltounge, and Metamorphmagus made him someone with incredible potential for greatness, and he had the ambition to achieve it.

Harry had slowly and secretly started to add to his list of spells. After he knocked out the troll with a simple levitation charm, Harry started to go back and practice other simple charms as offensive spells. His personal favorite was the flying charm. He had finally achieved a comfortably with the charm. Now with sheer mental focus, he could

manipulate the object he charmed. That was a huge step according to Flitwick in being able to do two charms simultaneously.

"Well I'm off guys, I've got to go pack. I leave on the 7am express tomorrow." Blaise said as he got up.

"Yea me too, you coming Harry?" Draco asked.

"Nah, I'm going to grab some desert, and then I'm going to go mail a gift. If you two are going to bed, then I guess I'll see you when term starts." Harry said with his best faux-smile.

"Take it easy, Harry." Blaise said.

"Since when am I, Harry and not Potter, Blaise?" Hary asked cheekily.

"Oh, I'd say you were Harry a while ago, but you've been just too damn depressed to notice it." Blaise said.

Harry just nodded his head. "Have a Happy Christmas, Blaise." Harry said honestly.

"You too, Harry." Blaise said as he left.

"Are you sure you're going to be ok, Harry? If you want, you can still come to the manor." Draco said honestly.

"Thanks Draco, but I really do have some projects I wanted to do, and I have to be at Hogwarts to do them." Harry said.

"Alright then Harry, have a Happy Christmas mate." Draco said.

"Yea, you too, make sure you practice some Quidditch moves because I'll be practicing here." Harry said honestly.

Draco just smiled, nodded, and followed Blaise out of the Great Hall.

Harry ate for a few more minutes before he decided it was time to leave. He ascended the staircase that led to the owlery. When he

turned the first corner though, he saw a most unwelcome sight, Gryffindors, a whole pack of them.

"Well, well, well Potter, I hear you're going to be staying at the castle over Christmas break. So sad does nobody love you enough to take you home for Christmas." Ron Weasley said drawing several laughs from his peers.

"What exactly do you consider a home Weasley. From what I hear, your entire family lives in a giant one bedroom flat where you all have to share a bed and a single blanket. Tell me do you even get gifts?" Harry asked menacingly. Harry's rather cruel joke was rewarded when Weasley's face became bright red.

Not about to let Weasley get another shot in about his dead parents Harry went in for the kill. "It's true isn't it. Merlin, why doesn't your family just sell its pureblood name to some wealthy halfblood. I mean it would kill two birds with one stone. It would rid the pureblood community of a poor embarrassment of a family, and your father could finally have his wish and go live as a muggle."

Harry smirked when it looked like the youngest Weasley was about to explode, but a more unwelcome voice than Weasley was the one to speak up from the side.

"Do you have to be so terribly cruel all the time, Potter. What makes you better than Ronald." Hermione Granger said defiantly.

Harry had a sudden urge to hex the girl through the nearest wall. This Mudblood, no this thing, was the reason he wasn't going to have a happy Christmas with Tonks. He fingered his wand in his left hand. Before he knew what he was doing, he started to walk towards the filthy bushy haired girl.

He must have looked murderous because Hermione's eyes grew wide and she started to take a step back only to hit a stone wall.

Harry raised his wand to his hip just in case anyone thought to attack him from behind. He put his face within ten inches of Hermione's face and said, "Listen up you filthy Mudblood. It's your fault I'm staying at

this blasted castle instead of celebrating Christmas with my best friend. Next time you speak to me, I'll hex your lips off."

There was a gasp from behind him and Harry whirled around to see Tonks staring at him. Her eyes had so many emotions, shock, disbelief, confusion, but then it settled on one Harry saw constantly on his uncle, anger. "How dare you call her that, Potter! I can't believe I ever considered you a friend. You're nothing more than a pathetic blood purist with a scar that makes you think you're something special." Tonks said quickly.

Harry felt like he had just been stabbed in his heart. Suddenly all the Gryffindors started cheering.

"How do you like that scar head!" Ron yelled

"Not so important now are you, Potter!" A boy Harry didn't know yelled.

"I always new Tonks was a Gryffindor!" Lee Jordan screamed

"Way to put him in his place, Tonks!" A black boy Harry thought was named Dean shouted.

"Why don't you just kill yourself, Potter..." Fred said

"So you can be with your worthless parents..." George said

"Because no one here loves you!" They finished together.

Harry tried to hold back the tears that were threatening to cascade down his face with the twin's finally words. He turned he head away from the jeering Gryffindors and looked at Tonks. For her part, Tonks looked like she couldn't believe what she had said and what it had caused. Harry didn't care though. His best friend, no his first friend had just publicly betrayed him. He looked at the person he once would have done anything for right in the eye. "I guess this is goodbye then, Tonks, Happy Christmas. Enjoy the gift. I was going to mail it, but just take it. It'll be the last one you ever get from me." Harry said as he shoved his parcel into her chest and turned the

corner to head back down to the Dungeons. He got about halfway there before he had to enter an unused classroom. He casted the locking and silencing charm on the door, and then he broke down in tears for what he had just lost.

&&&

Upstairs, Tonks was standing in the same place, breathing heavily, and clutching Harry's gift to her chest. She had a look of utter horror plastered all over her face, and tears started to fall down her face. Most of the Gryffindors left after Harry had gone, but the twins, Lee Jordan, and Hermione remained.

"Don't worry about Potter, Tonks, you're better off without him." Lee said.

"Yea Tonks how about you..." Fred said.

"Take his present..." George replied.

"Up to the Gryffindor Common room..." Fred said.

"And toss it in the fire." They said together.

Tonks turned around and with her free hand punched the George in the face breaking his nose. She then turned her wand on Fred and sent her best disarming spell, which struck him in the head. He flew back a good twenty feet before he hit the stone wall and fell to the floor.

"I hate you! I've always hated you! Harry was the only person whoever accepted me for who I was, and now he's gone! I hate Gryffindor house and I hate all of you!" Tonks said as she clutched Harry's present and started to run down the hall. She got about a foot before a hand grabbed her shoulder. She turned around to see Hermione Granger looking at her.

"Thank you for standing up for me." Hermione said weakly.

Tonks wanted to slap her, "I shouldn't have. I wish I never got into this stupid argument with Harry about you in the first place!"

"But you did, and I wanted to thank you." Hermione said again albeit reluctantly.

Tonks shook Hermione's hand off her shoulder. She felt hot tears run down her face, and she ran down the hallway. She wanted to keep running until she tripped over something and died. How could I have said that to him. In front of half of Gryffindor house of all places. He'll never forgive me for this. I've just cost myself the best friend I've ever had.

Tonks continued to run with her eyes closed until she ran right into someone. They both fell to the ground with a thump and several books crashed all around them.

"Ms. Tonks, ten points for running in the hall and..." McGonagall stopped yelling when she saw the tear stained face of one of her students. "Merlin are you alright Nymphadora?" McGonagall asked now frightened that the girl had hurt herself.

Tonks just shook her head, and started to cry.

"Where are you hurt should I call Poppy?" McGonagall asked.

Tonks stood up at the mention of the school nurse. She didn't need the infirmary she needed Harry. "...I'm fine m...ma'am. I don't need madam Pomfrey." Tonks said through tears.

McGonagall only then noticed that her student was clutching a small parcel very closely to her body. It was wrapped in Quidditch paper and it had several snitches floating all over it. Thinking that perhaps it wasn't a physical pain she was in McGonagall softened her normally stern facial expressions. "Dear would you like to join me in my office?" McGonagall asked softly.

Tonks just nodded her head and McGonagall guided Tonks into her office. When they were inside, Tonks broke down in tears clinging to Harry's present.

"Ms. Tonks what is it?" McGonagall asked.

"Harry...he...he hates me now." Tonks said between fits of tears.

McGonagall for her part was completely shocked. She had hoped that spirit of Christmas would have brought the two together, but it appeared as if it had only pulled them further apart.

"Dear are you sure. Perhaps you misinterpreted something." McGonagall said hopefully.

Tonks just cried harder at that. "H...he...he said this would be the only present he...he would ever give me. This is all my fault...This is all my bloody fault. I...I just should have let it drop!" Tonks wailed.

"Ms. Tonks what was the fight about? What happened?" McGonagall prompted.

"H...he blamed someone for him not spending Christmas with me...he...he said something terrible to them...when I heard it...I...I got mad and said something horrible....what's worse was half of Gryffindor was there...and...and they heard what I said...they said some horrible things to him...how...how...no one loved him...and...how he was going to be alone here for Christmas. He...he looked horrible...the...the Weasley twins....the Weasley twins suggested that...that...that..."

"What did they suggest dear?" McGonagall asked concerned.

"They said he should just kill himself so he could be with his parents because no one here loved him." Tonks admitted. "Professor....he...he looked terrible. He turned to face me and he...he told me that this would be...be the last gift...I ever get from him." Tonks sobbed.

McGonagall's face paled dramatically when she heard what the Twins had said. How could they be so cruel it is Christmas!

"I will speak to the twins." McGonagall said darkly.

"NO! No don't. Harry said some bad things also, I...I don't want him to get in trouble." Tonks said brokenly as she clutched her present.

"I take it that's Mr. Potter's present?" McGonagall asked.

"Yes, he was...he was going to mail it. Oh Professor what have I done." Tonks

For once professor McGonagall didn't answer she didn't know how to fix this. It was something that was out of her control.  
Slytherin Dormitories, Hogwarts

Harry awoke on Christmas Eve alone in his dorm room. Harry had assumed that his break was going to be bad, but after his fight with Tonks, words couldn't describe how depressed he was. To take his mind off Tonks, he had thrown himself into his studies. He had added several spells to his offensive repertoire. He had also mastered using the flying charm to send knives or small sharp objects at an opponent. He practiced by throwing them against the wall in the Slytherin dormitory.

Harry did his best not to leave the Slytherin dormitory during the day except for meals and his meetings with teachers. He had broached the subject of Dumbledore's past with Flitwick, McGonagall, Snape, and Quirrell.

Flitwick told him the stuff that any book about Dumbledore could have, and gave him nothing useful.

McGonagall didn't even let him get on the subject of Dumbledore. The second he entered her office she essentially demanded to know how things were with Tonks. A very uncomfortable Harry left her office thirty minutes later unsure of how many lies he told her. Whatever it was it was clearly a record, and he knew she didn't buy it for a moment.

Snape promptly told him to go away the moment he knocked on his door.

Surprisingly it was Quirrell who provided the most information.

::Flashback::

Knock Knock

"C-Come in." Quirrell said.

Harry opened the door slightly. "Professor Quirrell can I talk to you for a moment?"

"M-Mr. Potter, C-come in. W-What can I do for you today?" Quirrell stuttered.

"Sir I was wondering if you might be able to help me out. You are aware that I am Transfiguration gifted?" Harry asked.

"Y-yes." Quirrell said.

"Well I was doing some research and I found out that Professor Dumbledore was gifted in Transfiguration as well. I wanted to find out more about him, but none of the books are helpfull. They just describe his accomplishments or that kind of thing. I was wondering if you knew anything about him?" Harry asked.

"What would you like to know?" Quirrell asked without a hint of a stutter.

"Well what was he like when he was my age? Who was he before he became the world famous wizard?" Harry asked.

"And why are you not asking him these questions?" Quirrell asked.

"I-I'm a little frightened of him. He is an intimidating wizard, professor." Harry lied smoothly.

"I see. Well I do know a little bit about him. Professor Dumbledore grew up in Wales. He had one brother named Aberforth who is two years his senior. He graduated from Hogwarts in 1857. He was top of his class in Transfiguration, Charms, Potions, Ancient Runes,

Arithmacy, and Defense. When he left the school, he apprenticed under a Transfiguration master for one year before getting his own mastery in the field. He sort of floated around for a decade until he met his wife Prunella. They were wed in 1870. Dumbledore worked with a man by the name of Nicholas Flamel until 1890. They grew famous when they discovered the twelve uses of Dragon's blood. I believe his first and only child was born a few years before that. I believe his birthday was 1882, but I can't be certain of that. I do know that Albus was around forty at the time. Dumbledore joined the Wizengamot in the year 1900, where he serves to this day. He assisted Nicholas Flamel and a few other famous wizards by defeating a dark lord by the name of Gnarfare in 1917. It's important to note that Dumbledore was a well known pacifist until that." Quirrell said.

"What changed his mind?" Harry asked.

"Gnarfare killed his wife. She was raped by Gnarfare's followers and then beheaded by Gnarfare himself. Gnarfare wasn't the brightest dark lord you see. In reality, he had no business even attempting to come to England." Quirrell said.

"Wait I don't understand what do you mean he had no business coming to England?" Harry asked.

"Mr. Potter what do you know about other wizarding countries?" Quirrell asked.

"Er well nothing sir." Harry admitted sheepishly.

"Well there are stronger wizarding countries and there are weaker ones. Some of the stronger ones are England, France, Egypt, Germany, and Italy. They all have had ministries in place for over 800 years, and have rarely if ever fallen under complete control of a dark lord. Now the ministries of Eastern Europe and some African wizarding countries are much weaker. In fact in many countries like Estonia, Romania, Hungary, and Austria, dark lords rule over the people. Now for the sake of the sanity of normal wizarding folk here in England we give them flashy titles, but to everyone in the know, they are just the most powerful dark lord in the region who took power. A

lot of the larger countries like to throw their support in behind a certain dark lord that way they gain access to products that country might have. It's all rather nasty politics so I won't bore you with the details." Quirrell said.

"So how does Gnarfare fit in?" Harry asked.

"The dark lord Gnarfare was a brutal dark lord out of the Sudan with an overly inflated sense of self-worth. He thought that his magic was stronger than anyone else because he could trace his family line back to great Pharos. He quickly took control of most of Eastern Europe as the dark lords ruling those states were very weak at the time. Well he got some stupid idea for world domination and attempted to take Germany where he was repelled by Hans Fredrick Frantz, who was believed to be the strongest wizard in the world at the time. Gnarfare was dejected but continued trying to take over other countries. He failed in Italy, Egypt, France, and Russia before he made his way to England."

"Now by this time, Gnarfare was losing influence and power quickly. Germany had taken Austria and Hungary from his control. Italy, France, Russia, and Egypt were working on removing him from power in his other states in Africa and Europe. So in what was one of his stupidest moves he attacked Dumbledore manor with his closest followers. When Albus found out, he led the international group that finally killed him a few weeks later in Scotland."

"Albus was grief stricken after his wife's death and began to focus very much on family. He lived for his son and when he was introduced to his grandchild I heard that he even considered retiring from politics entirely. Instead, he took the job as a transfiguration teacher at Hogwarts in 1930, something about wanting to teach his granddaughter all he knew."

"The world changed in 1938 though when Hans Frantz died and a wizard by the name of Grindelwald took his place as the German Chief Warlock of their Wizengamot. He called an emergency session in 1939 and demanded an oath of allegiance to him. Now you have to understand that Grindelwald was a charismatic and powerful leader Harry, people were drawn to him. So it was no surprise when 80

percent of the German Wizengamot agreed to the oath. What surprised everyone though was when he butchered the twenty percent who didn't vote for him."

"What followed was horribly bloody war. Grindelwald and his muggle counterpart Hitler took control of several countries. Grindelwald recruited the smaller dark lords to his inner circle and made a pact with a squib who was the fascist leader of Italy by the name of Mussolini. Grindelwald invaded and conquered France. It was the first time in 650 years that France was occupied by enemy wizards. Dumbledore convinced the English Wizengamot that war was eminent, and he was right. Grindelwald attacked London later that day, but the charter to war was already issued."

"Sadly the war against Grindelwald was fought mostly with young impressionable youths, and most paid the price for it. Dumbledore's own Granddaughter joined the fight at the age of fifteen after she completed her Owls."

"What happened to her." Harry asked quickly.

"Who Dumbledore's granddaughter? I'm not one hundred percent sure. I believe she was wounded in an ambush, and a prominent French pureblood family found her, but I've gotten off topic." Quirrell said.

"Now Dumbledore defeated Grindelwald in..."

"I'm sorry professor, but I'm rather late for a meeting with professor Flitwick. Perhaps we could continue this conversation later." Harry asked politely.

"Of course Mr. Potter, my door is always open." Quirrell said.

Harry left Quirrell's office to process the information he had gotten about Dumbledore. He was so caught up in his own thoughts that he didn't realize that not once during his explanation had Quirrell stuttered.

::End Flashback::

Great Hall, Christmas Eve 11:59 pm, Hogwarts

Harry walked into the Great Hall at 11:59pm for a special midnight Christmas diner. Dumbledore apparently was strolling about in muggle London when he saw several restaurants had special midnight Christmas dinner specials. The eccentric headmaster thought it was a good idea and brought it to Hogwarts.

The first thing Harry noticed when he walked into the Great Hall was that the four house tables were gone and replaced with a single long table.

"Ah Mr. Potter join us!" Dumbledore said brightly as he motioned to an empty seat next to a boy wearing Ravenclaw robes.

Harry took a seat and put on a very forced smile when Dumbledore offered him a popper. Harry pulled it with Dumbledore. The popper exploded and a book with the stupidest looking man Harry had ever seen on the cover appeared along with a large wizards hat appeared on the table. Harry rolled his eyes at the book named Magical Me and promptly took the hat.

"So Harry how has your Christmas been going?" Dumbledore asked.

Harry noticed that professor McGonagall seemed to stop her discussion with Madam Pomfrey to listen in. "Er well it's the best Christmas I've ever had." Harry said honestly though that wasn't saying much. The fact that he wasn't with the Dursley's guaranteed it.

Dumbledore just smiled brightly at him. "Well that's excellent my boy. Often I worry that a student will get a little lonely when their friends are gone."

"Well I've been working on some charms and transfiguration to keep me occupied." Harry said absentmindedly.

"Really, Mr. Potter? What have you been working on?" Flitwick asked curiously.

"Oh, I've just been working on some offensive spells as well as working on better controlling an object in flight." Harry said.

"What spells?" Dumbledore asked curiously.

"Er well the most powerful spell I can do right now is the cutting curse, Diffendo." Harry said.

"Well that's very impressive, Mr. Potter. I couldn't do a cutting curse during my first year. Could you Headmaster?" Flitwick asked.

"I could not, Filius." Dumbledore said with a smile.

"Mr Potter, I thought you had excellent command of the flying charm from what you showed me in our last lesson could you demonstrate your improvement?" Flitwick asked.

Harry pointed his wand at his fork and said, "Volo." The fork floated in the center of the table, and Harry set his wand down. Harry stared at the still floating fork for a few moments before jerking his head upwards. A moment later the fork rocketed skywards, and stuck itself in a wooden plank high above the Great Hall.

Most of the professors stopped eating to stare at him. Finally it was Flitwick who smiled and started to clap. "That was excellent Mr. Potter. I'd say that fork would have to be traveling pretty fast to actually get stuck in enchanted wood. Your mental control over an object in flight is very impressive; perhaps we should have another broom race. This time I think I'll forget the burning charm on the barrier." Flitwick said brightly.

Harry just smiled, nodded, and went back to eating his meal.  
Tonks Residence, Surry

Andromeda Tonks thought of herself as a good parent, well as good as a working single mother could be. So when her daughter got off the Hogwarts Express looking quite awful she wanted to know what was wrong. Apparently though, this was a problem that her daughter didn't want her help with. Andromeda felt terrible as Nymphadora spent the first ten days of her vacation holed up in her room crying.

Andromeda hoped that Christmas Eve would help her daughter's spirits. Nymphadora had always been an excited girl when it came to Christmas. So when Andromeda awoke at one in the morning on Christmas day with no excited little girl in her room asking her to get up and open presents, she was very worried.

Andromeda ran into her daughter's room where she found her cradling a doll on the floor sobbing. Andromeda didn't recognize the doll at all, but she had to know what was wrong with her little girl.

"Nym sweetheart please tell me what's wrong." Andromeda asked.

Much to her surprise though her daughter just pointed to her bed.

Andromeda walked over to her daughter's bed and noticed a letter.

Dear Tonks,

I hope you are having a Happy Christmas. I know things between us haven't been good. Ok I'll be honest they've been terrible this last month and a half, but that doesn't mean I'm not going to be giving you your Christmas present. I've never had any money to get a gift, or a friend to give a gift too before I met you, so please don't laugh if it's stupid.

Please open your gift now!

Ok if you've opened your gift please let me explain before you come back to school and hex me for getting you a silly doll. I was reading Teen Witch Weekly (please don't ask why) and I found an article about an American doll that will take on any appearance you want it too including your own. Now here is why I think you will love me for this gift. If you tap your wand against the picture of clothing inside any wizarding or muggle magazine, say "Replico," and then tap the doll, the clothing will appear on the doll.

I thought that since you like to shop for clothes so much, but it takes so long because you can change your appearance if you had a doll that could show you what you would look like in the clothes, you

could save some time. You would be able to see what clothes you liked on you before you even went to the stores.

I guess a part of me is just being a selfish boy who doesn't want to get dragged around shopping with you over the summer, but still I thought you might like it. I hope we can get past this stupid thing with Granger, Tonks. I miss my best friends.

Still and always your best friend,

Harry.

Andromeda put the letter down. "I don't understand Nym, it seems like such a thoughtful gift. Are you worried about what you got him?"

Tonks just turned a tear stained face to her mother. "We...we had a fight the day before the train left. We...I...I said some horrible things mum. I...I don't think we're friends anymore." Tonks said as she broke down in sobs again.

Andromeda's eyes rose now fully understanding why her daughter was so depressed.

Slytherin Common Room, Hogwarts.

Harry sat by the fire in the Slytherin common room. He had a pile of Christmas presents directly in front of him, but he didn't have a smile on his face. No Harry was depressed. After a quick look through his presents, he found that Tonks hadn't gotten him anything. A tear fell down his face. He had hoped that prior to their fight on the fifteenth that she would have wanted to make up with him. The fact that she hadn't even bothered to get him a gift for Christmas spoke volumes about what she really thought of him.

The few presents that he did get were amazing, but the fact that Tonks hadn't gotten him anything hurt him a great deal. Draco had gotten him a broom servicing kit for his Nimbus. Ironically this was the same gift that Harry had gotten him. Lucius and Narcissia had sent him the big book of wizarding customs. It was a very interesting, albeit a bit boring, read. He found the section on wizard oaths, life debts, and unbreakable vows fascinating. Just the fact that magic

was essentially a living thing that could tell when a wizard or witch broke an oath fascinated Harry.

Professor Flitwick actually bought him a copy of Advanced Charms Theory by Anton Dolohov. His note said that the headmaster agreed that the book really wasn't dangerous and it would be one less book that Harry would have to check out of the library.

Harry smiled at the tiny professor's gift. Flitwick was his favorite instructor, and Harry felt pretty certain that school teachers didn't give Christmas gifts to everyone.

The gift Harry didn't ever expect to receive though came from an anonymous source. It was a beautiful cloak. He put it on and went to look at himself in the boy's bathroom. When he got there his eyes bulged out of his head, he was not in the mirror. It didn't take a genius to figure out that this was an invisibility cloak. Draco had mentioned just how rare that they were earlier in the semester. The note that came with the cloak just had a strange looping handwriting he had never seen before. The note simply said that the cloak was his father's and the man was returning it to him.

Harry just shrugged his shoulders at the note and placed the cloak safely in his trunk.

At two thirty in the morning, Harry left the Slytherin common room. He stood right outside the entrance to the common room before he blended into the shadows. He closed his eyes and focused on moving across the wall in the dungeons. His senses flared and the world lit up with the all so familiar lines of grey and black that he could follow. He immediately began following one of the lines that led towards the great hall.

Harry had been traveling around the school for the last ten days in his shadow form, and he had found some incredible things. For one, the reason the third floor charms corridor was off limits was because there was a gigantic three headed dog standing over a trap door. Harry thought about going back there just to see what was under the trap door, but he didn't want to risk whatever being under the three

headed dog being a lit room. If he got trapped, he didn't think he could explain it to Dumbledore.

So Harry raced around the school in his shadow form. The school at night was completely open to him. Harry found that he could travel right under locked doors or through the keyhole if the door reached the ground. Harry was currently racing around the lower parts of the astronomy tower. He had past by Snape, Peeves, and McGonagall in her animagus form, and none of them were the wiser to his presence.

Harry followed a particularly dark line into an unused classroom. When he entered the room though, he stopped. The only object in the entire room was a massive mirror against the back wall. Harry dropped out of his shadow form and approached the goliath of a mirror. When he stood directly in front of it, he froze. Standing right behind him were several people. He instantly recognized himself, Mr. and Mrs. Malfoy, Mrs. Tonks, Draco, and Tonks, but the other two people he didn't know.

There was a man who had black unruly hair like his own. Harry's eyes widened, and he quickly turned around. There was nothing behind him, yet when he turned back to the mirror he saw them.

The woman he didn't recognize had tears in her eyes and was clutching the dark haired man's hand. The woman had beautiful red hair and the most intense green eyes. It took Harry a moment to recognize them, but then he understood. They were his green eyes.

"Mum? Dad?" Harry asked weakly.

The two people in the mirror nodded to him, and Harry fell to his knees breathing hard. How is this possible? How can they be here? Are they real? Are they Ghosts? Can I talk to them? Are they real? Why are Draco, Tonks, and their parents there also?

"Are you really here?" Harry asked

Everyone in the mirror nodded. Harry noticed that Tonks was jumping up and down excited. Harry felt a tear fall down his face as Tonks put

her arms around him and kissed him on the cheek. Harry just touched his face where the kiss had been, but he felt nothing. It was like these people just existed in the mirror.

Harry then heard a crash from the hall and a second later he heard Filch yell, "Peeves get back here! I'll get you for this!"

Harry turned to the mirror, "I've got to go, but I'll be back. I promise."

The people in the mirror just nodded their heads and Harry blended into the shadows. He quickly made a mental note as to where he was in the castle before he returned to the Slytherin common room.  
Empty Classroom, Hogwarts

Harry returned to the room with the mirror the next two nights. It was bliss for him to see everyone he loved in one place. He spent most of the day thinking about going back to the mirror at night. So the third day after he discovered the mirror he decided to go during the day. That way he couldn't be yelled at by anyone, and he would have more time with the mirror.

Harry arrived at the mirror at seven twenty in the morning. He then proceeded to skip breakfast, lunch, and dinner although he didn't realize it. He felt hot tears streak across his face as the mirror showed Tonks and Draco were showing him their Christmas presents while his parents spoke with the Malfoys and Mrs. Tonks. Harry was so focused on the mirror that he didn't hear his teachers enter the room.

"Mr. Potter?"

Harry turned around quickly. Standing in the doorway, were professors McGonagall, Flitwick, and Dumbledore.

"Hello professors." Harry said as he wiped the tears off his face.

The teachers looked at him for a moment before all three of their gazes went to the mirror. "Mr. Potter how long have you been here?" Dumbledore asked concerned.

"I'm sorry sir, I'll leave now. I need to grab lunch anyway." Harry said as he started to walk out of the room. When he got to the door, McGonagall touched his shoulder.

"Harry it's ten o'clock. Curfew has been in effect for over an hour. I dare say you missed lunch." McGonagall said concerned.

"Oh, well. That's ok I guess. I mean I'm not hungry anyway." Harry said as he tried to move past his teachers.

"Harry it seems that you've discovered the joys of the Mirror of Erised." Dumbledore said sadly.

Hoping to find out something more about the amazing mirror, Harry stopped trying to get past his teachers. "That's what it's called?" Harry asked.

"Yes, Harry. Do you know what the mirror shows?" Flitwick asked sadly.

"It shows your family completely happy and talking to each other. It shows Tonks back as my best friend." Harry said before he could stop himself.

The three professors shared a very pained look with each other.

"Harry, the mirror is charmed to show someone's deepest most heartfelt desire." Flitwick said softly.

Harry's eyes rose a little realizing what he just gave away. "I...I..."

"Harry I must apologize to you. I did not think that anyone would find the mirror over Christmas break. Professor McGonagall and Flitwick were just about to help me move it to a new location." Dumbledore said.

"NO!" Harry shouted before he could stop himself. "Please, I-I..."

The three professors looked at the boy with grim looks. "Harry," Dumbledore said as he got on one knee so he could look him in the

eyes, "people have wasted away in front of that mirror. Others have gone mad wondering if what the mirror shows is a possible future or even physically possible. You want only to see your loved ones, but Harry you must not dwell on dreams and forget to live. Please do not seek out the mirror again."

Harry dropped his head. He knew Dumbledore was right. He had become obsessed with the mirror the last few days. "Ok sir." Harry squeaked out.

"Mr. Potter, I was going to give you this at dinner, but you were not there." McGonagall said as she handed him a parcel wrapped in brown paper.

"You got me a present ma'am?" Harry asked.

"No, someone delivered that to my office last night and asked that I give it to you." McGonagall said.

Harry accepted the gift, nodded to his professors, and walked back to the Slytherin common room. When he entered the common room, he sat in his favorite chair in front of the fire. He noticed there was a note hanging off the gift and he opened it.

Harry,

I am writing you in the hope that you and my daughter can rectify your friendship. Harry, Nymphadora is depressed. She regrets whatever it is that she said to you. She wouldn't tell me what it was or even why you two were even fighting in the first place, but she is incredibly distraught by the entire thing. She barely eats, and she is constantly in tears.

She loved your gift, Harry. So much so that she wouldn't open any of her other presents. She informed me that she did not send you your present. When I asked why, she said that you would most likely just burn it. Harry, I know that you would never do such a thing no matter how angry you are at my daughter. I found Nymphadora crying over your gift yesterday, and I took it from her. I then flooed Minerva and asked for her to give your gift to you.

I really don't know what to say Harry. I've never seen Nymphadora happier then when she was with you over the summer, and I've never seen her more depressed then this Christmas. I love my daughter very much Harry, but I also know her very well. She thinks that she doesn't deserve your forgiveness for whatever she said. She's lost her happy bounce that I've grown so accustomed to seeing.

I know she never had many friends, Harry. So when you two grew so close this summer, I was so happy. You both seemed like you needed each other. Nymphadora told me you convinced her to play Quidditch this year. I had no idea my daughter was so gifted on a broom. You seem to have a deep insight when it comes to my daughter so I hope you can understand how terribly sad she must be with you two fighting. She had told me countless times that the entire fight is her fault. I don't know if that is true, Harry, and a part of me hopes it's not, but you should know that she wants to make up. She just doesn't think you'll accept her back.

Please write her.

Andromeda Tonks.

Harry set the letter on the ground. A thousand thoughts were racing through his head.

She's sorry?

Well she should be.

She's depressed?

Good, she should be after all so am I.

She thought I would have burned her gift?

Well that's a little extreme.

She doesn't think she deserves my forgiveness?

Why did she side with those Gryffindors over me? Why did she say those things in the first place? Why did she stab me in the back for the stupid mudblood?

Finding only more questions than Andromeda's letter could answer, Harry placed it on the table and opened the present. He tore off the brown paper. It was a book. Harry opened the first page and gasped. He flipped through the pages. Every page contained pictures of Tonks and him. The book had pictures with the two of them at Malfoy Manor, pictures of them studying in Tonks' kitchen, there even were pictures of the two of them during the first few months at Hogwarts.

On the last page, there were no pictures. Instead there was a note addressed to him.

Harry,

I noticed Mrs. Malfoy, during one of our Quidditch games at Draco's, was taking some pictures. Draco told me that most the boy's in Slytherin have pictures of their family around their beds. Since I know you don't have any pictures of your parents, I owled Mrs. Malfoy and asked for any copies of the pictures she took. I also found some pictures that my mum took of us at my house over the summer. I don't know if you'd like to put the photos up in your dorm, but I just thought that it'd be a good gift.

Tonks

P.S If you are wondering about the Hogwarts pictures, I asked a few house elves who clean Gryffindor tower to take some photos of us during the year.

P.P.S I know we are having a fight, but I hope that we can get past it eventually. You are and will always be my first and best friend, Harry. Happy Christmas.

Harry held the photo album close to his chest as some tears fell down his face. Harry quickly made a decision and left the common room. He ran up towards Gryffindor tower, and knocked on McGonagall's office.

&&&

Minerva McGonagall was not having the best night. After she had given Harry his present, she had torn into Albus about the risk of placing the Mirror of Erised where a child could find it. Her heart broke when Harry unknowingly revealed his deepest desires to her, Filius, and Albus. She was preparing to go to sleep when the alarm for someone knocking on her office door went off. Curiously she flooded from her quarters to her office. She opened the door to see a rather teary eyed Harry Potter.

"Mr. Potter are you alright." She asked.

Harry just numbly entered her office and took a seat. She quickly closed the door and instead of sitting behind her desk as she normally did, she pulled up another chair and sat next to the boy.

"Harry what is it?" She asked.

"I...I want to...to know if you can make me a portkey?" Harry asked

Of all the things she was prepared for, an illegal portkey was not one of them. She didn't even think that the young man even knew what a portkey was. Realizing that just denying the boy his request outright might not be the best thing, she asked, "Why Mr. Potter?"

"I-I want to go visit Tonks. I need to know why she did it, Professor. It can't wait till she gets back to school. I...I can't have the conversation here at Hogwarts. Harry said.

Minerva had never been more torn over a decision in her entire life. On one hand, she had wanted young Harry and Nymphadora to fix their relationship. Mr. Potter was clearly trying to do that. Forgetting the fact that making a portkey was illegal for anyone but the headmaster and that students were not allowed to leave Hogwarts once they decided to stay, the boy wanted to show up at eleven o'clock at night unannounced at Andromeda's home.

"Mr. Potter, I...I...I don't think that..." But that was as far as Minerva got in denying the boy's request. His face looked absolutely destroyed when she started to tell him no. She thought back to what Andromeda told her about Nymphadora being depressed over the break. Deciding that the mental well being of two students was more important, she changed her thinking. "I don't have the power to make a portkey, Mr. Potter, but I will ask the headmaster, if you'll excuse me for a moment."

Harry nodded his head and he watched as his professor through some powder into her fire, shouted something, and disappeared.  
Headmaster's Office, Hogwarts

Minerva McGonagall stepped out of the fire in the headmaster's office to a strange sight. Professor Dumbledore was attempting to feed his pet Phoenix a lemon drop. The Phoenix seemed to be chirping in annoyance while the headmaster persisted that he try it.

"Albus surely you can see that Fawkes has no desire for your candy." McGonagall said.

Fawkes thrilled in agreement. Dumbledore sighed and put the box of candies back on his desk.

"I never understood why no one appreciates a good lemon drop, Minerva." Dumbledore said with a smile.

"Yes well Albus I have a problem. I have a rather distraught Mr. Potter in my office. He seems to want to go visit Ms. Tonks in Surry." McGonagall said bluntly.

Dumbledore's face showed shock for a moment before understanding seemed to sink in. "I take it that it has something to do with the parcel you delivered to him?" Dumbledore asked.

"I do believe that played a part in it. The present was from young Nymphadora, but she didn't think he would accept it. Andromeda gave it to me last night to hand over to him." McGonagall said.

"Minerva you know the rules as well as I do. No student who decides to stay at Hogwarts may leave unless they are pulled out by their guardians." Dumbledore said.

"Really Albus, I think the mental well being of two of our students is far more important. Andromeda informs me that Ms. Tonks is completely distraught and slightly depressed. Mr. Potter isn't much better. I don't have to remind you that he only comes out of the Slytherin common room for food. Truthfully I think if he figured out that the house elves would deliver the food directly to him, he would never leave." McGonagall said.

"Minerva, surely they can repair the damage to their friendship when school resumes." Dumbledore said.

"Albus it might be too late! I have been trying to get the two of them to make up for the last two months. This is the first time that either of them has actually tried to take steps to rectifying their friendship. Can't you understand that they are both stubborn and independent people, Albus. What if Mr. Potter decides that it's not worth it tomorrow when the effect of Nymphadora's present wears off."

"Minerva surely the situation isn't nearly that bad." Dumbledore said.

"Albus! Mr. Potter told us tonight that his deepest desire was to have Nymphadora back as his friend. The boy had been staring at the blasted mirror for Merlin knows how long, which I'll remind you was your fault! Just give him the portkey, I'll wait with him at Andromeda's and bring him back after they talk." McGonagall said.

Albus felt slapped when she had brought up the mirror. It was a low blow, but it didn't make it any less true. The poor boy had lost a lot in his life, and then he stumbled upon a powerful magical object that showed his deepest desire. Albus wasn't sure how long ago he found the mirror, but it was clear it wasn't today. Knowing that this was one argument his Transfiguration teacher and confidant would take no for an answer on, Albus sighed and took out a Quill. "Portus." He said before handing it over to his deputy headmistress.

"Thank you Albus." McGonagall said as she took the portkey and flooded back to her office.

Dumbledore looked to Fawkes who was eyeing him carefully.

"Do you think I did the right thing just now?" Dumbledore asked his phoenix.

Fawkes thrilled in affirmative and Dumbledore took solace from that. Smiling slightly, he took out his lemon drops. "Fawkes I get you a package of lemon drops for Christmas each year, and every year you refuse to eat them. Can't you just try them once?"

Fawkes just chirped indignantly at the headmaster  
Outside of Tonks Residence, Surry

"Thank you for doing this professor." Harry said as he walked up to the front door of Tonks' house.

"It was nothing, Mr. Potter." McGonagall said. Truthfully, they were breaking several very important rules, but it was worth it.

Harry took a deep breath before ringing the bell.

Harry and McGonagall waited for a few minutes before a very tired and annoyed looking Andromeda Tonks opened the door. When she saw who was it was though, a large smile split across her face.

"Come in you two, it's dreadfully cold outside." Andromeda said.

Harry and McGonagall stepped into the warm house, took off their traveling cloaks, and sat down in the kitchen. Before anyone could say anything though, Harry heard a very familiar voice.

"Mum who's calling at this hour?"

Harry turned around in his seat and saw a very wide eyed Tonks staring back at him.

"H-Harry?" Tonks asked hesitantly.

"Hello, Tonks." Harry said just as hesitantly.

"Well we'll leave you two alone. Minerva would you like to join me in the drawing room for a nightcap?" Andromeda asked.

"I would love to, Andromeda." Minerva said as she got up and followed her out of the room.

Harry and Tonks sat at the table looking at each other for a good ten minutes before Tonks broke the awkward silence.

"I love your gift." Tonks said weakly as a tear threatened to fall.

"I-I love your gift as well." Harry said.

"What do you mean?" Tonks asked confused.

Harry took out the photo album and placed it on the table.

Tonks gasped when she saw the gift she had worked so hard on. Her mother must have sent it to him when she took it from her.

There was another lengthy silence before Harry looked up at Tonks with tears in his eyes.

"Why did you do it, Tonks?" He asked weakly.

Tonks pulled herself together the best she could. "I-I was upset Harry. I was raised my entire life that, that word was horrible. I mean I knew Draco would use it, hell he said it on the train when we first met Hermione, but I never thought that you would ever say that. My mum said my dad always had to..."

"I'm not talking about that." Harry snapped.

Tonks seemed taken aback. She was sure he was talking about their last fight. "What do you mean then?" Tonks asked.

"Why did you chose Granger over me? Why did you throw me out of your life for some stupid know it all, who you barely knew?" Harry asked.

"Harry...you were horrible to her for no reason. I-I still don't understand why you hate her so much. I mean when you went out of your way to just be mean to her on Halloween, I just thought about how the twins went out of their way to make my life horrible. I just don't understand why you hate her." Tonks said.

"I hate her because what she represents." Harry said sadly.

"What do you mean?" Tonks asked.

"Tonks, you know what my life was life before I met you. The muggle world has...has treated me horribly. Granger is a muggleborn and muggleborns are a link back to the world that beat me and forced me in a cupboard for ten years." Harry said as a tear fell down her face.

Tonks wanted to smack herself, she never thought about it that way. She just saw him as tormenting a girl who was already hated. "Harry there are so many muggleborns at Hogwarts, but you don't treat them all like you do Hermione."

"I don't know any other muggleborns! Granger is the only person who has ever told me that they were muggleborn. I mean I know who is and who isn't a pureblood, but I don't care about halfbloods. Hell I thought I was a halfblood for a while, you were my best friend and you are a halfblood. It's muggleborns I can't stand. I'm not a blood purist, Tonks. When I called Granger mudblood, it wasn't because I think she's dirtying up the pureblood gene pool." Harry said.

Tonks felt like Harry had stabbed her when he said she was his best friend. "Harry...I...I'm sorry. I just...I thought that you were just hurting her because everyone else was. I'm sorry. I didn't think about it from your point of view. I should have known that you wouldn't hate someone for no reason." Tonks admitted.

Harry sighed, "So what do we do, Tonks? Where do we go from here?"

Tonks looked down at the table unable to meet his eyes. "I...I don't know Harry. I-I'm sorry about everything. I'm sorry that I said that to you in front of all those Gryffindors. I-I was just so mad about what you said. I forgot where we were. I...I want to be your best friend again, Harry, b...but I...I understand if you won't have me." Tonks said as tears started to fall down her face.

Harry nodded his head as he stared at the table. "I...I...I understand why you would be upset with me treating Hermione that way. I reminded you of what happened to you last year. I just wish we could have gotten past this stupid thing before it got so bad. I had a horrible Christmas Tonks. I...I...I wanted to spend Christmas with you." Harry admitted.

"I...I...I kn...know H-Harry, I wanted to spend Christmas with you too. It was horrible here by myself. I-I felt like it was last year all over again. I mean Draco would write but I missed you...s-so much. W-When I got your present, I wanted to d-die. Please forgive me, I...I'm so sorry, H...Harry. I'll never do anything like that again. I...I promise." Tonks said between fits of tears.

The two of them looked up from the table at the same time, and they looked into each others tear stained face. "I forgive you, Tonks. Will you be my best friends again?" Harry asked.

"Yea." Tonks said as she got up and hugged Harry very tightly, tears still falling.

"Good." Harry said.

The two of them stayed in the kitchen and talked about all that they had done without each other for the previous two months. Harry told her all about the mirror of Eristad, how far he had gotten during his private lessons, and the three headed dog he found in the third floor charms corridor using his shadow mage abilities.

Tonks cried when Harry told her what he'd seen in the Mirror of Eristad. She smiled when he got excited and talked about his private

lessons, and she gasped when she heard about the three headed dog.

When it was her turn to share what she had been doing, Tonks admitted that she had become friends with Hermione as early as October.

Harry didn't like the fact that Hermione and Tonks had gotten close, but he refused to get into another argument with his best friend so quickly after they made up. He just told her that as long as she didn't expect him to become friends with her he didn't mind.

Ten minutes later, professor McGonagall and Mrs. Tonks entered the kitchen to find Harry and Tonks laughing about something.

"Well I'm glad that you two are alright." Professor McGonagall said with a very rare smile.

"Thank you for taking me here, ma'am. I suppose it's time we go back now." Harry said.

"What! Mum can't Harry stay. I mean it's only two days before the train goes back." Tonks said quickly.

"Minerva, I would happy to bring Harry to the express in a few days." Andromeda said.

McGonagall looked pensive, but then smiled, nodded, and returned to school alone.

&&&

The next two days at Tonks' house were the best of the vacation. They couldn't do any magic, but Harry found out that he could take things with him when he shadow traveled. Tonks was hesitant to be the first person he tried to take with him, but ultimately decided to try it. The result was beyond strange for the both of them. Harry had to constantly hold Tonks hand to keep her in the shadow realm, but when they were shadows there was no hand to hold really. It was a strange feeling. Harry knew if he wanted to he could let go and she

would enter the physical realm, but he didn't know how he held her hand as a shadow. Harry found that it was a lot harder to take someone with him in the Shadow realm, and sometimes he would get tired and release Tonks by accident. Another thing that they found out was that if they disagreed about where to go they couldn't move. Harry decided to drop Tonks out of the realm once when they were under her bed and didn't want to leave.

Before the two of them realized it, it was time to go back to Hogwarts, and they made the trip to Kings' Cross station. Harry and Tonks found an empty compartment near the end of the train, and Harry helped her put her Trunk up.

"Harry?"

Harry turned around quickly and smiled as Draco and Blaise looked at him in confusion

"Hey guys." Harry said.

"Harry what are you doing here? I thought you stayed up at Hogwarts?" Blaise asked.

"Oh he did, but a few days ago he showed up at my house with professor McGonagall and we made up." Tonks said from the corner.

Draco smiled brightly, "Finally. Merlin it took you two long enough."

Harry and Tonks smiled sheepishly and nodded their heads.

The ride back to Hogwarts was fairly uneventful. That was until Hermione Granger showed up after seeing Tonks through the compartment window.

"Hey Tonks." Hermione said as she opened the door. She froze though when she saw the three Slytherins Tonks was sitting with. "I-I-I'll just go find another compartment."

Tonks looked incredibly torn as she looked between Harry and Hermione.

Harry knew that Tonks would never leave the compartment. Not after they had just made up, but he also knew that she wanted to talk to the mudblood. Taking a deep breath, Harry said, "Tonks if you want to go talk to her go, it's fine."

"No, Harry. I'll stay." Tonks said. "Tonks, I know you'd never choose her over me, but I also know that you want to talk to her. So go it's fine." Harry said hesitantly.

Tonks smiled brightly and kissed him on the cheek. "Thank you Harry!" She said as she left to go find Hermione.

"Harry, what the hell was that? Is Tonks friends with that trash?" Draco asked in shock.

Harry sighed, "Yea, she is. She told me she was starting to get close to her as early as October. I don't like it either Draco, but I'm not going to get into another fight with Tonks again so soon. Not over some stupid mudblood." Harry said in a tone that said the conversation was over.

Draco wanted to go run after his cousin, and shake some sense into her; however, he didn't want to upset Harry or his emotionally charged cousin and get another stinging hex to the bits.

Blaise just looked on curiously. His family was never one for the whole blood purity thing, and he didn't exactly have an opinion on it. Needless to say he just stayed quiet until the conversation shifted to less controversial topics.

Hermione Granger's Compartment, Hogwarts Express

Tonks left Harry's compartment in search for Hermione. She found her alone in a compartment near the front of the train.

"Hey, Hermione." Tonks said.

Hermione looked up.

Tonks sighed, Hermione's face was red and puffy. She looked like she had been crying.

"Hey, Tonks. Why are you here?" Hermione sniffed.

Tonks sat down next to her and smiled. "Because I'm your friend you daft witch." Tonks said with a smile.

Hermione sniffed again, "Why? I mean I saw you with Potter and Malfoy. You clearly made up with Harry. Why would you want to be my friend?"

"Hey, there is nothing that says I can't be friends with both you." Tonks said.

Hermione shook her head, "Yes there is, Tonks. Harry hates me. I don't know why, but he does. You'll eventually have to choose between us, and I know you won't choose me."

Tonks sighed. A part of her agreed with Hermione, but she couldn't bring herself to think about that. "Harry doesn't hate you, Hermione."

"YES HE DOES! HE GOES OUT OF HIS WAY TO MAKE ME FEEL BAD!" Hermione screamed.

Tonks closed the compartment door, put up a silencing charm, and locked the door. "Hermione, I'll tell you why Harry doesn't like you, but you have to give me a witch's oath to never repeat what I tell you. Harry will kill me if he found out I told you." Tonks said.

Hermione was hesitant, but a part of her wanted to know what she did to make the famous wizard dislike her. "How do I make the oath?"

"Raise your wand, say your name, and then say you swear on your life and your magic to never repeat what Nymphadora Tonks tells you in this compartment about Harry Potter." Tonks said.

Hermione raised her wand and said, "I Hermione Jane Granger swear on my life and my magic that I will not repeat what Nymphadora Tonks tells me about Harry Potter in this compartment."

There was a flare of magic, and Tonks was satisfied with the oath.

"Hermione, let me just say first that Harry doesn't hate you, he hates that you're muggleborn." Tonks said.

"But that's stupid there are tons of muggleborns at Hogwarts, he doesn't treat them all like he does me." Hermione said.

"Hermione, Harry only knows for sure of one muggleborn, you. He knows who is and who isn't a pureblood, but he's got no problem with halfbloods. It's muggleborns he hates." Tonks said.

Hermione's eyes widened. "So because I'm the only person he's sure is muggleborn he hates me! But why does he hate Muggleborns and not halfbloods? I thought all purebloods hate anyone who isn't pureblood."

Tonks sighed, "Hermione, Harry thought he was a halfblood until he underwent a blood purity ritual. He also met me before any other wizard or witch, so I think apart of him can't hate halfbloods because he always liked me. You were the first muggleborn that he ever met."

"But...but...he seemed to hate me the minute I told him I was muggleborn. He didn't even give me a chance!" Hermione demanded.

"Hermione...Harry's muggle relatives didn't treat him well." Tonks said.

When Hermione just gave her a confused look, Tonks sighed and elaborated. "They abused him, Hermione. His uncle beat him daily, and forced him to live in a cupboard under the stairs."

Hermione's eyes went wide with that and her face paled. "That's terrible!"

"That's not all. His cousin would beat him up and get other kids to beat him up as well. The first time I ever saw Harry, he was bleeding all over the place hiding in some bushes. My mum and I fixed him up,

but when we brought him back to his uncle, he was beaten for not being home by curfew.” Tonks said as a tear fell down her face.

Hermione looked like she didn’t want to believe it. “Tonks...I-I...wow.”

”Can you at least see it from Harry’s perspective now Hermione? He hates muggles because all they’ve ever shown him is pain. He sees you and all muggleborns as a link to a world he wants to forget.” Tonks said.

”So...so...what do I do, Tonks? I mean I can’t just not be muggleborn.” Hermione said.

”I know and that’s what makes it so unfair. You are suffering for something you can’t change, and Harry can’t help but hate you for reminding him of his past.” Tonks said.

The two girls sat in silence for some time. For once in her life, Hermione had no clue how to fix a problem and no book could help her.

A/N Remember to leave a review! This is the longest chapter that I’ve written so far for this story, and the second longest chapter I’ve ever written What I’m trying to say is don’t get use to this kind of chapter length, 13K words is a huge chapter for me. I hope everyone enjoys this chapter, I think it’s one of the best I’ve ever written for any one of my stories.

## Chapter 10

### Quidditch and Dragons

The month of January had been Harry's best since his first month at Hogwarts. Not only was Tonks back as his best friend, but McGonagall had restarted their private sessions. Harry smiled as he thought back to his first lesson with the usually stoic teacher, whom he now considered his second favorite professor after Flitwick.

::Flashback::

"Welcome back Mr. Potter." McGonagall said.

"Thank you ma'am it's great to be back." Harry admitted.

"Yes well I trust that you've been keeping up with your study of theory?" McGonagall asked.

"Yes ma'am, I'm actually ahead. I've read up to transfiguring inanimate objects into other inanimate objects." Harry replied.

"Excellent. Now today we are going to do something different. Excluding your last few theory tests, you have always shown that you can explain the theory well, regardless of how difficult I make the wording." McGonagall said with a smirk.

"Does that mean I don't have to do them anymore?" Harry asked hopefully.

"Oh heavens no, Mr. Potter," McGonagall smirked, "but for today you will not be taking one. I have a different idea. I have a large number of first year transfiguration tests that I put off grading over the holidays. Needless to say, some of your fellow students have gotten on me about getting them back to you."

Ravenclaws. Harry thought.

"And not all of them, Ravenclaws." McGonagall said.

Granger. Harry thought

"So what do you want me to do while you grade?" Harry asked.

"Oh no, Mr. Potter, you misunderstand me. You will be helping me grade the papers. We will do that for the first thirty minutes." McGonagall said.

"But why?" Harry asked confused.

"Spotting mistakes is often just as important as understanding, Mr. Potter. If you are serious about achieving a mastery, I should tell you there is an entire section about spotting the flawed part in transfiguration theory on the test. It is among the most difficult areas to be honest." McGonagall said.

Harry nodded his head in understanding, and accepted a rather large pile of papers from McGonagall. Together the two of them started to grade the papers.

Harry was astounded by some of the idiotic answers his class mates gave. A Hufflepuff named Ernie Macmillan actually said the reason a mouse turns into a teacup is because you say the incantation. Harry actually started to enjoy failing a large number of them or awarding no points for horrendous answers. That was until he got to a one Hermione Granger's paper.

Harry wanted to scream as he read through her answers. It was like the girl literally swallowed the text book. After he read her fourth answer, he couldn't take it anymore. He just started to cross out every line that he knew was a direct quote from the book. When he realized that he had crossed out most of the paper, he scanned the paper again. When he finished, he realized that the girl had made a fatal error, which caused him to smile evilly. At the bottom of her test he wrote, "Plagiarism will not be tolerated. The assignment was to be in your own words not the authors. You did not list your sources when you copied the answers directly out of the book and claimed them as your own. Transfiguration is about more than just memorizing text, you do not describe any of the mental focus or skills that are required for any of the transfigurations. While your answers are correct, the

manor you present them and your short sightedness is not." At the top of the page he wrote a big T for troll.

Smirking, he handed the paper to McGonagall.

Harry enjoyed watching his transfiguration teachers shocked face when she realized whose paper he had effectively given a 0. Harry smirked as his professor tightened her lips, but then shook her head in defeat. She knew he was right and that made it even better for Harry.

"Was that really necessary, Mr. Potter?" She asked.

Harry's smirk was almost on the verge of a full smile. "I believe it was professor. She can't just copy the words straight from the text and pass it off as her own; you never let me get away with that." Harry said.

"I...I will warn Miss Granger of this for the future. Don't you think it too be prudent to perhaps just give her a warning first?" McGonagall asked.

Harry could tell his teacher clearly had a soft spot for the muggleborn. "Ah, but professor you warned us about Plagiarism on the first day of class. I think by giving this paper back to Hermione, you will set a precedent that this is not acceptable."

"I am going to go over her answers personally Mr. Potter. Surely she interjected her own opinion somewhere." McGonagall said.

"Oh yes, she did, if you'll look there are a few places that I didn't scratch out. If you want to grade those words since they are her own work feel free." Harry said knowing that the girl's only real words were her name and a few isolated thoughts.

"Very well Mr. Potter. Let's move on to the practical." McGonagall said with pursed lips.

::End Flashback::

Harry smiled as he recalled Hermione's reaction to hearing that he, Harry Potter, had graded her paper and found her guilty of plagiarism. She looked like she was going to cry when McGonagall handed her paper back with a large T on it. Maybe it was seeing how terribly sad the mudblood looked, but McGonagall eventually allowed her to make up the test. Hermione turned to Harry when McGonagall said that and smirked. Harry got the last laugh though when McGonagall told her to hold on to her old test as everything that he had written was absolutely true, and that the highest grade she could achieve on the make up would be an acceptable.

Great Hall, Hogwarts

It was now January the twenty-fourth and Harry, Draco, and Blaise were busy shocking the entire Slytherin table by showing up wearing Red and Gold to support Gryffindor in the Quidditch game later that day. Harry enjoyed seeing a vein in Snape's temple look like it was going to pop when they first sat down.

"Potter! Why are we doing this again?" Blaise hissed.

"Oh, back to Potter now are we, Blaise?" Harry asked.

"When you make me dress up as a Gryffindor, you are damn right you are Potter!" Blaise said sharply.

"I bet if I dressed you up like a Hufflepuff you wouldn't mind. Susan might even like you a little more." Harry said with a smirk as Blaise colored. It was no secret that Blaise and Susan had grown close. Blaise had even told Draco and Harry that they had visited each other over Christmas.

"We are just friends, Potter. It's not like having a girl as a close friend is impossible. Isn't Tonks one of your best friends?" Blaise responded.

"Ok, ok you win. You two are just friends." Harry said sarcastically.

"Watch it, Harry. I might tell Susan that you and Draco are going to give the Hufflepuffs a hard time during the game. I have a feeling the other Slytherins won't want you to sit with them. The Ravenclaws won't like someone with Gryffindor colors in their stands when they

are playing them, and I don't think the lions will be all that accepting of you two. So. Be. Nice." Blaise threatened.

Harry and Draco grimaced. Blaise was right and they all knew it.

"I swear to Merlin, Tonks had better catch that damn snitch. I am not going to dress up in these horrendous colors only to see her lose." Draco said very loudly.

Most the Slytherins laughed at that, and Harry thought he even saw a smile start to appear on McGonagall's face for a second when he looked up at the staff table.

"Oh don't worry cousin; I'll be sure to catch the snitch quick for you. I mean I wouldn't want you to have to wear such horrible colors that long." Tonks called out as she walked past the Slytherin table with the rest of the Gryffindor team.

Harry and Blaise laughed as Draco demanded that she do just that.

A few minutes later, the three of them walked over the Hufflepuff table where they met up with Susan and a few of her friends.

"Hi, I'm Harry." Harry said pleasantly too the two people standing next to Susan.

"H-Hannah Abbot." The girl Harry recognized as the pigtailed girl who was the first to be sorted said.

"Ernie Macmillan." The other boy drawled.

"Oh I know that name. I failed you on the last transfiguration test. You actually said it was the incantation that made the mouse turn into a teacup." Harry said with a laugh.

Ernie's eyes darkened at that news. "That was you who McGonagall let grade the last test. You are a terrible grader. I could think of at least four questions I should have gotten at least half credit on. I mean you gave me Dreadful!"

"Oh you just probably wrote your usually squabble and got called out on it Ernie. I got an E and Hannah actually got an O on that test." Susan said brightly.

Harry decided not to tell them that he didn't grade their papers.

"Draco Malfoy." Draco said as she shook Hannah's hand and politely kissed it.

Hannah blushed slightly and Ernie looked like he wanted to punch Draco.

Harry smirked as Salazar rose out of his robes and observed the newcomers.

'That boy issss mad at the rabbit. I like him already.' Salazar hissed.

Harry just smirked as he shot Draco a 'Salazar just insulted you...again' look.

"Damn snake." Draco said a little too loud.

"I thought all Slytherin's liked snakes, Malfoy." Ernie said darkly.

"Yea well Harry's snake has some sick twisted desire to make my life hell." Draco muttered as Harry and Blaise smiled.

"I'm sure he's not that bad." Susan said grinning at Draco's pout. Blaise informed her over Christmas that Salazar and Draco didn't see eye to eye.

"Can I pet him?" Susan asked.

"Er, ok I don't think he's ever been pet before though." Harry said hesitantly.

"What you don't pet, him!" Hannah said in shock.

"Er well...no." Harry admitted.

"Boys." The two Hufflepuff girls said as they extended their hands and began stroking Salazar's slick skin.

'What are they doing?' Salazar demanded.

Harry just smiled.

'What issss thisss? Why do they insssisst on touching me? What issss the purpossse?' Salazar demanded.

"Ok, we have to get going if we are going to make the start of the game." Harry said.

'I want an anssswer! What wasss that madnesssss!' Salazar hissed

Harry fell back from the group as they were walking to the pitch. 'They were jussst petting you to ssshow that they liked you.' Harry answered.

'It wasss ssstrange tell them not to do it again. I am not some dog.' Salazar hissed

'I will.' Harry hissed as he ran to catch up to the group.

The six of them found seats high up in the Hufflepuff section. Harry and Draco both took out a piece of parchment and a quill. Flint had them on scouting detail. Harry had to watch Cho Chang, the Ravenclaw seeker, and Draco had to watch the Ravenclaw chasers.

"WELCOME WITCHES AND WIZARDS TO THE THIRD GAME OF THIS YEARS QUIDDITCH CUP! THE STANDINGS THUS FAR ARE AS FOLLOWS! IN FIRST PLACE, HUFFLEPUFF HOUSE WITH A RECORD OF 1-0 AND 260 POINTS. IN SECOND, SLYTHERIN HOUSE WITH A RECORD OF 1-0 AND 200 POINTS. IN THIRD PLACE, IS GRYFFINDOR HOUSE WITH A RECORD OF 0-1 AND 190 POINTS. IN FOURTH, RAVENCLAW HOUSE WITH A RECORD OF 0-1 AND 160 POINTS." Lee Jordan's magically amplified voice shouted.

"TODAY IS A MATCH BETWEEN THE EAGLES OF RAVENCLAW AND THE LIONS OF GRYFFINDOR. NOW ENTERING FROM THE NORTH SIDE OF THE PITCH ARE THE LIONS LED BY KEEPER AND CAPTAIN OLIVER WOOD. FOLLOWING HIM ARE THE THREE BEST AND MOST ATTRACTIVE CHASERS IN THE SCHOOL..."

"JORDAN!" McGonagall shouted.

"SORRY PROFESSOR. JOHNSON, BELL, AND SPINIT. NEXT THE WEASLEY TWINS, FRED AND GEORGE ARE THE BEATERS. FINALLY AT SEEKER, NYM...I MEAN TOOONKS! NOW ENTERING FROM THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE PITCH..."

Harry tuned out Jordan, he didn't care about the Ravenclaw team. All he had to do was watch Chang and Tonks. He was going to do it anyway, so taking notes was not that bad.

"So who do you think will be our toughest competition this year?" A boy said loudly one row above them.

"I dunno actually. Gryffindor is going to be really tough. Their chasers are really good, and their new Seeker is really good as well." A boy responded.

Harry and Draco found themselves listening in to the conversation much to the amusement of Blaise, Susan, and Hannah. Ernie just looked like he wanted to tell his housemates to stop talking.

"Yea I thought for sure that she was going to catch the snitch last game until Potter lost his damn mind and jumped off his broom." The first boy said.

"Hey, it was a risky move, but it worked and they won. I can't say I would have done that. I heard he fractured every bone in both his legs when he hit the ground. That's why I think Slytherin is going to be our toughest opponent. They are our next game and Potter's a damn good seeker. I mean Flint's a terrible captain and their chasers and beaters are sub-par. If we can just extend the game long enough to go up 150 points, we'll have a shot." The second boy said.

"Ced, surely you think that you can beat Potter to the snitch! I mean that girl Tonks was flying a Cleansweep 7, you've got a Nimbus like Potter!" The first boy said.

"I never thought the brooms mattered much. Potter's the kind of player who'll kill himself to get the snitch before you do. You saw in the last game when that bludger snapped his wrist and he kept playing. He's either got one hell of a pain tolerance or he's just that determined, either way it's not good for us." The boy named Ced said.

"True, but I think you're selling yourself short Cedric. I mean you're an awesome seeker. You'll probably be captain next year!" The first boy said.

"I'm sure Potter will be captain eventual as well someday. He's just got that...I dunno he's got the bravado. You know that necessary cockiness when he's in the air. I tutor Montague, you know that really stupid chaser on the Slytherin team, and he told me that everyone in the house hates that he and his friend brag so much, but they can't argue with results and Potter's really good." Ced said.

"Is this the same Montague who you claim leaked out a lot of the Slytherin's strategy to you?" The first boy asked.

"Ye..."

"HEY POTTER HOW DO YOU LIKE SITTING WITH THE PUFFS!" Ernie yelled very loud causing the two boys sitting above Draco and Harry to stop talking.

Harry could have hexed Ernie right there. That kid, Cedric apparently was getting Montague to leak their game strategy. Harry was enraged, but when he turned to look at Draco he saw only a massive smile on his friend's face.

"POTTER!"

Harry looked up and the two older Hufflepuffs who were looking at him in shock.

"Yes? Can I do something for you two?" Harry asked.

"What are you doing sitting here!" The first boy yelled.

"Watching the game. You honestly don't think I can support Tonks and sit in the Slytherin stands do you?" Harry asked cheekily.

"H-How much of our conversation did you hear?" Cedric asked.

"Only enough to tell you that Montague won't be on the team much longer." Harry replied with a grin.

"Damn it! Why did you have to bring that up, Steven!" Cedric screamed.

"What! How was I supposed to know the little snake would be spying on us!" Steven replied.

"Uh technically I wasn't spying on you. I'm spying on Chang." Harry clarified as he pointed up to the game as Gryffindor scored another goal making it 80-30 in their favor.

"Great. Well since Montague is probably going to be off the team, do you want to tell me who your new chaser is going to be?" Cedric said with a movie star grin.

"Don't worry we'll be sure to tell whoever it is to avoid you like the plague." Draco said leaning back to join the conversation.

"Blast." Cedric said.

"Harry look at Tonks!" Blaise shouted.

Harry, Draco, and Cedric all looked up into the air. Tonks was in a very steep dive heading straight for the ground.

"She's going to crash!" Hannah screamed.

"No she's not!" Draco and Harry said as Tonks pulled out of the dive the Snitch clutched in her hand.

Harry whooped proudly as his best friend did a victory lap. When she passed by where they were in the Hufflepuff stands she stopped and started to laugh.

"Oh Draco that scarf is hideous!" Tonks said as she sped off towards the ground, Draco cursing her as she flew away.

Harry, Draco, Blaise, Susan, and Hannah walked down the stands. Ernie spotted one of his dorm mates and decided to talk to them for a while after the game.

"So what did you guys think of sitting with a couple of puffs?" Hannah asked.

"Well, it wasn't as bad as I thought it would be." Harry said with a grin.

"Yea who thought that you puffs actually spied on other people. Merlin, you would have destroyed us." Draco said.

"Draco, I told you on the train not to underestimate Hufflepuffs. My auntie Amelia was a beater back in her day and was on a team where Hufflepuff won the Quiddich cup!" Susan said.

Draco raised his hands in surrender. "I will never again look down on the puffs. Not when you guys are just as sly as some Slytherins. I mean that Cedric was a genius. Montague was always stupid, but no one would have suspected a puff of tricking a Slytherin." Draco admitted.

"Potter! Malfoy! Get over here!" Flint yelled.

Draco and Harry said goodbye to the group and ran over to where their captain stood with Professor Snape.

"Alright you two lets see those notes you've got." Flint said.

"Marcus, we have something better than notes!" Draco said.

"I hope it's not more of that horrendous clothing, Draco." Snape said as he eyed the Gryffindor colors with distaste.

"No sir. We were sitting in the Hufflepuff stands when these two kids started to talk right above us. This one kid Cedric, I think he was the Hufflepuff Seeker..." Draco said.

"Yes, Cedric Diggory. A blond haired boy? He's actually a decent player." Flint said and Snape nodded in agreement.

"Yes well he was in a conversation with his friend...er...Harry what was the other kid's name?" Draco asked.

"Steven." Harry responded promptly.

"Yes Steven Allen. He's the Hufflepuff keeper." Snape said.

"Yes sir, well they were talking about who they thought would be their toughest team to face. Cedric mentioned that he tutors Montague and that he'd been tricking him into revealing our game strategy." Draco said.

"WHAT!" Snape yelled.

"You are sure of this. They weren't just setting you up?" Flint asked quickly.

"No. As soon as Cedric started to answer the question, a Hufflepuff we were sitting with screamed out Harry's name and alerted them to our being there." Draco said.

"Of all the stupid things! I bet Diggory leaked some of it to the Gryffindors. I knew there was a reason our plays were having no effect. Some of those we put in place two nights before, sir!" Flint said to Snape.

"Flitwick mentioned that Diggory was tutoring Montague in Charms. Blast! Montague is off the team Flint. We can't have leaks, not when we are in the hunt for the cup!" Snape said.

"I agree sir, but who takes his place?" Flint asked.

"Well I think that since young Mr. Malfoy helped to find out our leak he should get first shot. If he plays poorly, we can sub him out." Snape said.

"This isn't good though, sir. I mean we'll have to completely redraw our strategies and we play Hufflepuff in two weeks!" Flint said with exasperation.

"Well then I'll get back to the castle and book the pitch as often as I can for you. Mr. Malfoy...Mr. Potter, excellent job. Ten points for demonstrating why Slytherin is the most cunning house; I guess those ridiculous outfits did serve some purpose after all." Snape said as he swept back to the castle his cloak billowing behind him.

"Alright, Malfoy, Potter. We are going to be stepping up our training this week so clear your schedules!" Flint said.

"You know I can't do that. I've got extra lessons with Flitwick and McGonagall, neither of them will move the times." Harry said.

"FINE! BUT MERLIN HELP YOU IF YOU DON'T CATCH THE BLOODY SNITCH, POTTER! MALFOY YOU DON'T HAVE AN EXCUSE DO YOU?" Flint asked.

"No, I'll be there ready to play!" Draco said strongly.

"Good cause I'm not going to lose to some ruddy Hufflepuffs!" Flint roared as he left.

It took a second for Draco to realize exactly what happened. "Harry am I really starting the next game at Chaser?" Draco asked.

Harry smiled brightly, "Congratulations mate! You had better thank Tonks for those clothes; I don't think those two would have talked so freely if they knew we were Slytherins."

“You’re right! I’ll do that right after I write father!” Draco said as he raced back to the castle.

Great Hall, Hogwarts

The next two weeks pasted in absolute bliss for Harry, Tonks, and Draco. Tonks was still riding the high of Gryffindors dominating victory against Ravenclaw. Even a few Slytherins who sat near them at dinner congratulated her on the catch.

Professor McGonagall seemed very happy about the win, ecstatic even. So much so, that in their first private lesson after the match, they spent the first 20 minutes talking about Quidditch. Harry was surprised when his usually by the book teacher admitted to giving Tonks 10 points for handing her a Quill the day before.

Harry knew McGonagall was a huge Quidditch fan and bleed Gryffindor gold. When he looked at it from her perspective, he saw why she was so excited. The fact was she had hands down at least the second best seeker in the school in Tonks. Her chasers communicated and played together better than anyone else. She had a pair of human bludgers who were the cause of chaos on and off the pitch. Finally, she had a captain in Oliver Wood who was obsessed and wanted to play as a professional keeper. What was more impressive was that this group would stick together for the next two years while every other team would be losing players and having to readjust their team lineup. So Harry could see why even in a year where she wasn’t the frontrunner to win the Quidditch cup, she could still be excited.

Harry was also thrilled that Flitwick announced that they would be moving on to second year charms and theory now that he had officially completed everything for first year. Truthfully, Harry felt ready to move on a few weeks ago, but he trusted Flitwick’s judgment and waited. Flitwick now had him working on simple animation. The process was difficult, but very fun. Harry wanted to know how to charm a ball with wings so that he could practice catching the snitch over summer. Flitwick said if he worked hard, he might be able to reach that level by the end of the term. Needless to say, Harry was more than motivated. Unfortunately, he was a long way away from getting to that point. The most he had done so far was making a toy

soldier salute him. Flitwick said it was a very impressive start, but it was a long way from the mini war that Flitwick did with several soldiers when he introduced animation.

Draco was as giddy as Harry had ever seen him. Lucius had written him back to congratulate him for making the starting team in his first year. He also informed Draco that both he and Narcissa would be attending the next Slytherin Quidditch game.

Harry was impressed with how much Draco threw himself into the practices. Even Flint noticed and would constantly harass the other players to pick it up to Draco's level.

To top everything off, Ron Weasley had to be taken to the hospital wing for an infectious green bite to his left hand. Draco and Harry howled with laughter when they found out. They enjoyed theorizing about what could have bitten him. Draco swore that it was an Occamy that he saw Hagrid playing with in his hut. Harry just rolled his eyes. Occamys were rare and highly illegal in England. Plus, Salazar told him that if an Occamy was in fact on Hogwarts grounds he would be able to tell, something about their particular smell. When he asked about how sensitive Salazar's nose was, his familiar almost bite him for his ignorance. How was he supposed to know that Snakes smelled by using their tongues?

In fact the only thing that was truly bad at Hogwarts was the weather. It had been raining for the last five days and it was supposed to continue.

Before anyone had realized it the day of the match had arrived. Harry went down to breakfast where he spotted a flustered Draco Malfoy. Of course to anyone who didn't know Draco, they would have taken it as cool indifference. Harry just smiled and took a seat next to Blaise. "Merlin calm down, Draco." Harry said quietly.

"Easy for you to say, Harry, you've done this already. Plus you're a natural flier." Draco pointed out.

"So what! You are the best chaser on this team and you know that! Flint doesn't hold a candle to you, and Pucey is rubbish. You are

going to be the one who carries us in this game. The strategies that we've been working on the last two weeks are completely new, and you've picked it up great." Harry said.

"You think?" Draco asked.

"Are you kidding me? Draco, you're Draco Malfoy! Heir to the house of Malfoy. A direct line to Morgan Le Fay, are you going to let some stupid Hufflepuff beat you?" Harry said strongly.

"Hell no!" Draco said strongly as several people looked at him.

"Good." Harry said as his friend noticeably relaxed

Flint called the team to the locker room a little while later and Draco and Harry left to the cheers of the Slytherin team.  
Slytherin Changing Room

"Alright guys. This is our time. The last game was close, but we smoked out the traitor. Remember these are just a bunch of Hufflepuffs out there nothing else. There is not a damn reason scenario I can conceive where we don't win this game by 300 points. Now let's get out there and kick some Badger arse!" Flint said.

When Flint was done speaking, the team all got up, picked up their brooms, and flew outside.

The conditions for the match were horrible. The wind was whipping strongly from every direction and it was raining like mad. Harry was glad that Flitwick had taught him the water repelling and sticking charm for his glasses. If he didn't have those, he was sure he'd never find the Snitch.

When Lee Jordan finished his announcing of the standings and teams, Harry landed and stood behind Flint.

Madam Hooch instructed the captains to shake hands and a moment later her whistle sounded. Harry shot off into the air and noticed that Diggory was only a few feet away from him.

"Plan on marking me, Ced?" Harry asked.

"Nah, just wanted to say good luck." Diggory responded.

"Such a Hufflepuff." Harry shouted back over the wind.

"And damn proud of it you Slytherin!" Diggory yelled back with a laugh.

Harry had to dodge a bludger officially ending the conversation. He started to fly around looking for the Snitch when much to his astonishment Madam Hooch signaled for a time out to Slytherin. Harry flew down to see exactly what the hell was going on.

"Ok Draco what's so important that we had to waste our first time out already, it has been less then thirty seconds." Flint asked impatiently.

"Marcus look at their Beaters' positions! Look where their keeper is! They set up their entire defense around our old strategy! Montague must have gotten pissed off and told Diggory the rest of our plays!" Draco said quickly.

Flint eyed the opposition's setup and grinned. "Merlin, you're right Draco good catch. Alright guys listen this is what we are going to do. We are going to start by playing are old game. You know show them exactly what they want. Then after five minutes I'll take the Quaffle and fly to the center of the field and do a flip that'll be the sign to move to our new strategy. Hopefully the idiots will be so sure of themselves and Montague's information that well rack up a huge lead. Potter the snitch is going to be a bitch to see so just make sure that Diggory doesn't get to it before you. We'll give you a big enough lead so that it won't matter eventually." Flint said.

The team took back to the air and Hooch signaled for play to restart. Harry was shocked. I can't believe that Montague would be stupid enough to turn over our entire strategy to Diggory. He is going to really get it later tonight when the rest of the common room finds out.

Harry noticed that Flint's plan seemed to work exactly as he wanted. For the first few minutes, the Hufflepuffs essentially held the Slytherin

chasers at bay. It was 10-20 Hufflepuff when Flint signaled for the new strategy. The result was the fastest tallying of points Harry had ever seen. Draco seemed to out fly the entire Hufflepuff team as he led the Slytherin chasers to 100 unanswered points bringing the score to 110-20.

Harry saw Diggory's shocked expression when the Slytherins instituted their new strategy and couldn't help but shout, "Hope you didn't plan your entire defense on what Montague told you!"

Diggory whipped his head back to Harry, Diggory's eyes were wide with shock. The score was 140-20 when the Hufflepuffs called their first time out.

When they broke, they quickly took on a new strategy, but the damage was already done. The Hufflepuff chasers were exhausted from chasing the Slytherins across the pitch and constantly being on the defensive. Their keeper, Steven Allan, had taken several hits by bludgers, and he looked like he was about to pass out on his broom.

When Slytherin went up 160 points, Harry abandoned marking Diggory and started to fly around the pitch looking for the snitch. A bolt of lightning flashed across the sky and that's when Harry saw it. The snitch was illuminated for a moment near the teacher's stands. He immediately tore off directly towards them. Diggory quickly followed but at a distance clearly he didn't see the snitch when the lightning flashed. When Harry got to where he last saw the snitch he looked in every direction. Finally he looked down, floating a hundred feet below him was the little golden ball. This time Diggory saw it first and was already racing after it.

Harry pushed his broom downwards and was quickly flying at a steep ninety degree angle. Harry had the angle and the speed on Diggory, but Diggory was still slightly ahead. Both seekers were about twenty feet off the ground and traveling at their top speeds to catch the ball, which was just floating perfectly still.

Both Seekers stuck out their hands to grab the snitch, but Diggory reduced his broom's speed slightly so that he wouldn't crash into the ground. Harry did no such thing and continued to go full speed. He

caught the snitch in his right hand; however, he was unable to pull up and his broom smashed into the pitch, sending him crashing across the water logged field. He blacked out a moment after.

Hospital Wing, Hogwarts

Harry woke up in the hospital wing and moaned slightly.

"Well Mr. Potter good of you to finally wake up." Madam Pomfrey said.

"How long was I out?" Harry asked.

"Four hours. Not bad considering your injuries. I still can't believe they let you play that horrid game in those kinds of conditions. Really, it's a miracle only a few of you needed any treatment." Madam Pomfrey continued to rant for a while and Harry just tuned her out.

The sight of several people stepping through the hospital doors though caused Harry to smile. Draco, Flint, Tonks, and Mr. and Mrs. Malfoy quickly strode into the room.

"Harry you're finally awake it's about time!" Tonks said with a grin.

"That was some catch, Harry! I mean you did know we were already up 160 points right?" Draco asked.

"Yea, but Flint said we should have won by 300 after all they were just Hufflepuffs." Harry said with a grin.

"Damn right, Potter! That's the attitude I like!" Flint said with a massive grin.

"Good catch on Hufflepuff defending to our old strategy, Draco. That was brilliant." Harry said.

"Yea, so everyone keeps telling me." Draco said with a slight blush.

"Awww, does ickle Draco not like the lime light?" Tonks said with a grin.

"Stuff it Tonks. I'd just rather be making things work behind the scenes." Draco said.

"Like a true Slytherin!" Lucius said proudly clamping Draco on the shoulder.

"When are they going to let you out of here?" Narcissa asked.

"It will be never unless you leave right now! The boy has blunt trauma to the head! Now out!" Madam Pomfrey said coming back into the room.

"Oh Harry I forgot here is your potions essay. I won't lie to you, you really screwed the pooch on this one, but Snape said that if you want to re-write it and turn it in on Monday he'd take it. I don't think I've ever seen him so happy. He was with Sprout at the time, and I swear I saw him smiling!" Draco said as he handed Harry an essay with a large P on it.

"Ugh Draco what about my book? How am I supposed to do it?" Harry asked.

"Oh, damn you're right!" Draco said looking around. A smile quickly spread across his face. "Oiy Weasley isn't using his!" Draco said as he walked across the room to where Ron was sleeping. Draco shuffled through all the books that were next to him on a dresser before finding a Potions book. "Ok there you go!"

"Thanks." Harry said with a smile.

"Get better soon, Harry!" Tonks said as Madam Pomfrey shooed them all outside.

Harry decided that if he re-did the essay and got it to Snape tomorrow, Snape might be in a bit better mood to grade his paper than on Monday when the euphoria of the win died down. Harry grabbed Weasley's potions book and opened it up. A small piece of parchment fell out of it. Harry curiously opened the parchment, it was a letter.

Ron,

It's good to hear from you. I'm sorry to hear that Potter is a jerk.

Harry felt his blood boil. Weasley was complaining to his family about him.

I'm a little shocked that Hagrid is actually raising a dragon in his hut. I mean I knew Hagrid was a little crazy but wow!

Harry froze he couldn't believe it Hagrid was raising a Dragon. Suddenly what Draco said about an Occamy came back to him. Harry hit himself on the head. The wings, the long body! It wasn't an Occamy Draco saw it was a bloody baby Dragon!

Now Norwegian Ridgebacks are a rare breed Ron, but if you and your friends can get it up to the top of the North Tower on the eighth February at midnight then my friends will be able to get it to me in Romania.

It's good talking to you little brother

Charlie

Suddenly Harry smiled. The thought of getting Weasley's friends in trouble for walking about the school at night with a dragon was almost too perfect.

Harry pocketed the letter and started to work on his essay. Tomorrow night he was going to be laughing as Gryffindor lost at least a hundred points.

&&&

Harry left the hospital wing at eleven am the next morning. He politely gave Weasley back his potions book, and did his best not to grin at the idiot. Seriously who just leaves something as valuable as that letter lying around in a potions book.

When Harry entered the Slytherin common room, he was surprised to see Snape yelling at several seventh years. When he got closer and

heard the words, "how dare you bring Fire Whisky." Harry figured that the partying probably got a little too wild last night.

Snape turned around when the wall closed and Harry walked up to him.

"Er...professor here is my potions essay, Draco told me, you'd let me rewrite it." Harry said offering up his essay.

"Yes, thank you potter." Snape said in a dismissive manner as he took the essay and continued to berate the seventh years.

Harry went up the stairs to his dorm room where he found Draco polishing his broomstick.

"Already for the next game are we?" Harry asked with a smile.

Draco looked up and grinned. "Hey the old bat let you off finally. You missed a killer party last night. Pucey and Derik got Montague drunk and then the entire common room took turns hexing him. Flint was so smashed. You know those two seventh year girls, Jasmine and Veronica, well he takes them up on one of the tables..."

"Draco as interesting as I'm sure that story really is I've got something to show you." Harry said as he took out Weasley's letter.

Draco read the letter and his eyes grew narrow. "So what do we do? Tell a teacher?" Draco asked.

"And have Filch bollocks it up for us again! I suggest we get to the North Tower and ambush the bloody Gryffindors." Harry said with a grin.

"How are we suppose to get up there without anyone seeing us?" Draco asked.

Harry grinned and took out his invisibility cloak from his trunk. Draco gasped when he saw it.

"Is that real!" Draco said.

"Yep, I haven't really used it a lot because I can shadow travel. If it was just me, I'd just shadow travel up there, but I don't think that you will be willing to miss out on this one. Am I right?" Harry asked.

"Yeah you're right, but why don't you just shadow travel both of us up to the Tower? Tonks told me you figured out how to take people with you." Draco asked.

"I took Tonks around her room a few times, Draco, and that was hard to do. I'd never get both of us all the way up to the North Tower and back without dropping out of the shadow realm every ten feet." Harry said.

"Ok. I understand so when do you want to leave?" Draco asked.

"How about tonight at eleven? That will give us enough time to get up there and get ready." Harry said.

"Sounds good." Draco said with a smile.

The rest of the day past painfully slow for the two Slytherins. Tonks didn't sit with them at dinner. For some reason, she decided to sit with Hermione Granger and Lee Jordan. The three of them appeared to be deep in conversation. Harry and Draco actually didn't mind, tonight they had bigger fish to fry than some stupid mudblood like Granger.

At eleven o'clock the two Slytherins tossed the cloak over themselves and left the dungeons. It took a long time to reach the top of the North Tower. It took them so long that they only made it with five minutes till midnight. Luckily the idiotic Gryffindors hadn't shown up yet, nor had the dragon handlers.

At ten past twelve, Draco and Harry were starting to think that they missed them, but sure enough a few voices could be heard coming up the stairs. Harry grinned when he recognized the Weasley twins, Lee Jordan, and Hermione Granger. Draco tapped his shoulder and pointed to the window. Harry saw a few faint dots in the distance and cursed his luck. He wanted to have the Gryffindors subdued before

the blasted Dragon handlers arrived. Throwing cautions to the wind, Harry and Draco tossed off the cloak and opened the door to the hallway. They gasped when they saw Tonks and Neville Longbottom helping to carry a large crate.

"TONKS WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE!" Harry hissed.

The six Gryffindors looked equally as shocked to see the two Slytherin boys.

"Harry! What are you doing here!" Tonks yelled.

"I'm here to hex a bunch of Gryffindors, and then get them in trouble for helping to move an illegal Dragon!" Harry said darkly.

"Smart Harry." Draco commented dryly.

It was only then that Harry realized that the other five Gryffindors had put the crate down inside the room and drawn their wands on the two Slytherins.

"Put those away!" Tonks said.

"Why! You heard him he wants to get us expelled!" Lee said.

"Tonks what are you doing here!" Harry asked again fingering his wand slightly.

"Hermione, Neville, and I overheard these three idiots trying to move a dragon out of the school. We decided to help." Tonks said exasperated.

"Why?" Harry asked in shock.

"Merlin, Potter it's a bloody Dragon! It's dangerous! It has to be taken away before it kills someone! You can't tame a Dragon!" Hermione said yelled.

"Shut up Mudblood!" Draco and Harry shouted together.

"Stupefy!" Fred Weasley shouted.

"NO!" Tonks yelled.

Harry ducked the pathetically weak stunning spell and shouted "VOLO!" pointing his wand at the crate containing the dragon. He threw the crate at the attacking Weasley who ducked. Unfortunately for everyone, the crate contained a very irate Dragon. When the crate struck the stone wall behind Weasley, it broke open, and the small dragon was freed. The Dragon immediately started to shoot small puffs of fire into the very small room. Fred had to lunge away at the last second as the dragon shot a puff of fire right at his face.

"Confundus!" Harry heard several voices shout from behind him.

Harry turned around just in time to see a light blue spell hit him and Draco in the chest.

The force of the spell caused Harry fly backwards a few feet. When he opened his eyes, the world had tripled. Now there were three Tonks, Dracos, Longbottoms, Grangers, Jordans, and Six Weasleys in the room, along with three Dragons.

Harry panicked when one of the Dragons approached where he was lying on the ground. "Diffendo!" Harry shouted. The spell struck the Dragon's chest and the creature let out a yelp of pain as green blood shot out. Harry thanked Merlin that the baby Dragons hadn't developed its magic resistant scales yet.

"Stupefy!" Several voices shouted.

Harry looked up and at least 20 red stunning spells were flying right towards him. Harry grabbed the nearest Draco pulled him into the hallway and slammed the door. Harry tried to walk, but all he managed to do was lose his balance and fall backwards. The enchanted stairs seemed to tell that someone was starting to fall because they became a massive slide instead of steps. Harry and Draco fell down the slide all the way down to the base of the tower.

"WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS!" A very angry voice cried out.

Harry looked up and saw three very angry professor McGonagalls walking towards him with three very angry professor Snapes.

"POTTER, MALFOY WHAT ARE YOU DOING OUT OF BOUNDS!" Snape barked.

"Professors McGonagalls, professors Snapes. Dragons! Three dragons are being taken to Romania by like twenty dragon keepers. Dracos, Tonkses, and I went to stop them, but we were ambushed." Harry said.

"Mr. Potter have you been sniffing potions!" Snape raged.

"No professors Snapes. Go up you'll see!" Harry said gesturing wildly towards the north tower.

Snape quickly ascended the staircase, which had reverted itself by now, leaving a very confused Harry and Draco to stare at the three angry professor McGonagalls.

"Dracos, what did we get hit with?" Harry asked as he began to sway from side to side.

"Professors, the six of us got hit with a spell. It was blueish. The incantation was like Confaudus or Confindus." Draco said as he began to sway.

"Do you mean, Confundus Mr. Malfoy?" McGonagall asked as she leaned in to look at Harry whose eyes were glossed over.

"Never mind I can see it. Yes this is most certainly the Confundus Charm." McGonagall said as she began waving her wand removing the charm from the two students.

Harry shook his head slightly. "Ugh, professor McGonagall what happened?" Harry asked his head was throbbing.

"That is something I would like to know very much! I found these six upstairs as well. There was evidence of a duel, but I saw no Dragon

as Mr. Potter claimed.” Snape said darkly as he pushed the six Gryffindors down the stairs.

”I can answer that Severus, I believe Mr. Potter and Mr. Malfoy both reacted poorly to a confundus charm that is why they were each acting so strange.” McGonagall said.

”Draco who hit you with the charm?” Snape asked.

”I...er...I don’t remember, sir.” Draco admitted sheepishly.

”What is the last thing you do remember?” McGonagall asked.

”Diner.” Harry answered quickly.

”What! Those two came up here and started to attack us!” Fred Weasley shouted.

”And why would Mr. Potter and Mr. Malfoy come all the way to the North Tower at midnight to attack you?” Snape asked.

Fred was about to answer when he closed his mouth.

”This is completely unacceptable! Eight students out of bed and out of bounds well past curfew. Mr. Malfoy, Mr. Potter. I understand you reacted poorly to a spell, but you can’t go unpunished. I don’t know if you were trying to practice ahead for Filius, Harry, or if you and Mr. Malfoy were indeed cursed against your will. Unfortunately since neither of you can remember what happened; both you and Mr. Malfoy will receive a detention and lose 20 points each from Slytherin for being out of bounds well past curfew.” McGonagall said.

”As for the rest of you, I will be taking 40 points each from Gryffindor and you will all serve a months detention starting tomorrow. Now all of you get to bed!” McGonagall said.

”But what about the Dragon?” Draco asked.

"Mr. Malfoy, there was no Dragon it was all in your head. Now both you and Mr. Potter get back to the dungeons." Snape said with a hint of sympathy.

A/N Remember to Review. I have just completed up to chapter 15 in this story, but I still need to do a lot of editing. In case you are wondering, Harry's first year will go until Chapter 13. Also, Rise of Darkness chapter 17 is with my Beta, and I've begun working on chapter 18.

A/N Several people have asked exactly what Harry Potter pairings I like the most. Let me say I'm a huge Harry/Tonks fan, but sadly I've accepted that it will probably not happen in DH. Truthfully I believe Tonks will most likely die in DH. I don't know why, but I can see her either dying or watching Remus die. So the only hope I have at Tonks and Harry getting together would be if Ginny also dies, which I really hope happens as I hate the little red head at least for Harry.

After Harry/Tonks I like Harry/Hermione. I'm sorry, but no one can tell me that Ron and Hermione belong together.

JK said at least two main characters will die in DH. I hope its Ron and Remus that way at least one of my two favorite pairs can happen. Sadly I think it'll be some combination of Remus, Snape, Draco, or Tonks though. By killing off Remus, all the Marauders will have died (no way Peter will live through the book). I also believe Draco and Snape are for the light. Killing off Draco and Tonks would pretty much end every connection to the black family while killing Snape and Remus would officially kill off everyone from the Marauder's generation.

That's just my opinion anyway. Now on to the story...

## DARK LORD POTTER

### CHAPTER 11

#### Shadows in the Forest

The next couple of weeks past fairly easily for Harry and Draco. At first, their fellow Slytherins were outraged when they found out that Harry and Draco had cost them forty points for being out of bounds. That changed when Marcus Flint stormed into the common room and demanded that they stop harassing his two star Quidditch players. After Flint removed the bones from a fifth year prefect who continued to berate Harry and Draco, everyone got the message and let the issue drop.

According to Tonks, the six Gryffindors were not so fortunate. Tonks, Hermione, and Neville were painted as the ring leaders of the group even though that was far from the truth. They were ostracized by the

rest of the house including the Weasley twins and Lee Jordan, who claimed that they were trying to stop them from leaving.

Harry once again found the Gryffindors detestable. The fact that they could stare logic right in the eye and scoff at it made him want to scream. Tonks ate all her meals with the Slytherins, and Harry even overheard her speaking to professor Snape about a possible house transfer, which he promptly told her was not possible

Harry was currently sitting with Tonks and Draco in the Great Hall when three school owls swooped down to deliver messages to them. All three of them said the same thing.

Your detention will be served tonight at 8 pm with Hagrid. Meet Mr. Filch in the entrance hall by 7:45 pm.

Minerva M. McGonagall

"Well Tonks at least we all have detention together." Harry said with a grin.

"Ha easy for you to say, you only have to do it once. This is my twentieth, and I still have another eight after this." Tonks said dejectedly.

"I'm sorry about the whole thing, Tonks. Had we known that you were helping them, we never would have tried to get them in trouble." Harry said.

When Tonks gave him a penetrating stare he smirked.

"Ok so maybe we still would have tried to get them in trouble, but we would have done our best to keep you out of it." Harry said.

Tonks smirked. "Its fine Harry, tell me did you ever find you invisibility cloak?"

"Actually yeah. Someone sent it back to me last night if you can believe it. There was a note with the same wild handwriting. It just

said, "Use it well." I don't know who this person is but they seem overly dramatic to me." Harry said.

Tonks and Draco both snorted into their pumpkin juice and started to laugh. "Yeah only you would have a stalker with a flare for dramatic notes, Harry." Tonks said.

"So what do you think we'll be doing tonight?" Harry asked.

"Dunno I've never had a detention with Hagrid." Tonks admitted.

"Hopefully it'll just be lines. I mean Harry and I were confounded..." Draco said.

"Oh, shut up Draco. That load of crap you and Harry told to Snape and McGonagall about not knowing how you got to the North Tower might work on them, but I was there remember." Tonks said quietly.

Draco just blushed. "Sorry Tonks, I think I've had to explain it to so many people that I've actually started to believe it."

"Pssh at least you didn't have to deal with an angry Flitwick. McGonagall apparently thought that I was trying to skip ahead in my charms lessons. Flitwick yelled at me for about twenty minutes before handing me one of the largest Tombs I've ever seen on the bloody charm, which he made me spend the rest of the lesson reading. I think that should be enough of a detention if you ask me." Harry said.

"Ok stop complaining you two! So you've actually had to serve two detentions. You didn't have to sort Flubberworms for the care of magical creature's teacher with the Weasley twins. You also didn't have to clean Moaning Myrtle's bathroom!" Tonks said angrily.

"Moaning Myrtle?" Harry and Draco asked together.

"She's this stupid ghost who haunts a girl's bathroom. No one uses it because she floods the damn thing all the time. Filch had me clean it with Hermione! I just left after the third time Myrtle flooded a toilet." Tonks said.

"Let me guess the Mudblood tried to reason with the Ghost or something for three hours before she gave up." Draco drawled.

"Oh leave Hermione alone Draco. You're just upset that she's finally caught up to you in Transfiguration." Tonks said.

Harry just shook his head. He hated that Hermione and Tonks were becoming closer friends, and there was nothing he could do about it. He new that Draco felt the same way, but Tonks seemed to have taken Hermione under her wing. Harry didn't know why they were absolutely nothing alike. Tonks was fun, energetic, and laidback while Granger was a boring uptight bookworm. Harry just rationalized it to Tonks needing a friend in her own house. Merlin knows that she cut ties with Lee Jordan after he blamed the Dragon fiasco on her.

"So do you think that anyone else will be joining us tonight?" Draco asked.

"Yea probably at least one or two other people, I mean if Hagrid needs help it's probably something that requires a lot of people. Merlin I hope it isn't the twins." Tonks said.

Harry and Draco nodded in agreement.  
Entrance Hall, Hogwarts 7:45pm

Harry and Draco walked out of the Dungeons and to the Entrance Hall. When they saw who was present they both groaned. Standing besides Tonks was the Gryffindor Know it all and Longbottom.

"Nice to see you too, Potter." Granger said.

Harry and Draco just ignored her completely.

"Hello, Longbottom. Sorry about this whole thing. If I had known that you were one of the people trying to get the Dragon out of the School, Draco and I would have tried to make sure you and Tonks didn't get in trouble." Harry said.

Harry had actually started to respect the shy Gryffindor. While Neville didn't get good marks, Harry had overheard him telling Weasley that

he didn't think half the things about Harry were true. Harry had even gone so far as to ask for his help in Herbology a few days prior.

Draco of course disliked Longbottom, but he didn't want a confrontation with Harry over it.

It was actually kind of humorous. Draco, Tonks, and Harry all had one friend now that at least one of the three best friends couldn't stand, but they all refused to badmouth that person unless the three of them were alone together. For Harry it was Longbottom, Tonks had Granger, and Draco had recently been told by his father to start speaking with Pansy Parkinson because Lucius wanted her father to get on board with a ministry bill.

"Thanks Harry." Neville said shyly.

"Enough talking." Filch said as he came walking towards them with his cat trailing him.

"S...Sorry sir." Neville squeaked out.

"Yes sorry." Harry drawled sarcastically earning himself a glare from the caretaker.

"I'd give you another detention for you lip, Potter, but Hagrid has an even better punishment for you rule breakers. It's the forest for you five tonight!" Filch said with a sick grin.

"WHAT!" Draco, Harry, and Tonks screamed as Neville and Hermione paled.

Filch just let out a cackling laugh. "Yes, yes, yes it's true. You five are going in to the forest with Hagrid. Ha, I'd bet my next paycheck that at least one of you don't come back with all your limbs attached. Merlin knows that the forest has all sorts of nasty creatures that would love to take a bite out of you."

"But...but that's servants work! When my father finds out about this." Draco said in shock as the group numbly followed Filch towards Hagrid's house.

"You know! It's about damn time that Dumbledore started giving harsher punishments. I still say they should bring back the whippings and the chains. I've still got the cuffs and a nine-tail in my office just in case..." Filtch said.

Harry, Draco, and Tonks tuned out the insane caretakers ranting while Granger and Longbottom went white as Filtch described the type of punishment that Hogwarts use to give.

The five students arrived outside of Hagrid's cabin a few moments later.

"Filtch is that you?" Hagrid called out from behind the small house.

"Yes, Hagrid I've brought the condemned." Filtch said with a sick grin.

"What are you talking about to you batty squib?" Hagrid asked.

"HAGRID!" Filtch roared.

"You're a squib!" Draco said with a laugh.

"You'll keep that quiet lest you want to be the first person to be hung upside down by their feat and whipped with my nine-tails!" Filtch roared.

"So that's why you're late. You been scaring them have you. Well your job is done, get back to the castle." Hagrid said darkly.

"I'll be by to pick them up later this evening." Filtch said as he and Ms. Norris quickly left.

"Alright you lot, listen up. I'm going to be taking to you into the forest, but don't worry. I've already cleared it with the Centaurs, and the other sentient groups know we are entering." Hagrid said.

"What about the things that aren't sentient! Father told me there are werewolves in that forest!" Draco yelled.

"Well if you knew anything, Malfoy, you'd know that tonight isn't a full moon." Granger said.

Draco looked like he wanted to slap her, but Hagrid spoke up. "Well don't worry, we'll be going in two groups. I'll be with one and Fang, now where is that mutt. FANG! FANG GET OVER HERE!" Hagrid called.

A large dog came bounding over from Hagrid garden and stopped next to the kids.

"Fang here will be with the other. So nothing should happen to you lot." Hagrid said.

"I want Fang!" Draco called out instantly.

"Ok, but I warn ya he's a coward." Hagrid said with a smile.

Harry had to bite back a laugh as Draco's eyes rose slightly.

"Hagrid what are we going to be doing?" Tonks asked. "Oh hey Nymphadora, I didn't see you there. Something's been hurting some Unicorns lately. Now one of them is hurt in there. We got to find it to heal it or if need be, put it out of its misery." Hagrid said.

Harry and Draco both shared a shocked when they heard Hagrid call Tonks by her first name. Their shock was only magnified when Tonks didn't seem to get mad at him at all. The mentioning of a hurt Unicorn though, scared both the boys slightly.

Unicorns were very light oriented magical creatures. Truthfully any regular animal predator like a wolf would feel a natural aversion to hunting them, and no light magical creature would even consider it. That meant that it was a dark magical creature that was hunting the unicorns, and there weren't a lot of them that could do that. Unicorns were very fast and very strong with light magic. The creature would have to be fierce to catch and wound a Unicorn.

"Well come on you lot, we don't have all night." Hagrid said as he and Fang began walking towards the forest.

The forest wasn't nearly as bad as Harry thought it would have been. The fact that it was dark outside combined with the dense foliage from the trees blanked the entire area in shadows. Maybe it was because Harry knew he could easily escape or hide from anything in the forest, but he was incredibly relaxed.

"You know it's not that bad." Harry said after a few minutes of walking.

"That a boy Harry, I tell everyone that the forest isn't that bad, but sadly it's got a reputation. Dumbledore wants to make sure the students stay safe so he encourages it." Hagrid said with a huge smile.

"Are you mad, Harry, this is the most terrified I've been in my life!" Draco hissed.

"Harry, I'm with Draco. I want to get the hell out of here. Look to your right do you see the size of those spider webs!" Tonks said her voice slightly higher than normal.

Harry just smirked at them all and continued to follow Hagrid.

'Massster, thisss foresst is dangerousss. Sssomething evil ressidesss in it.' Salazar hissed.

Harry fell back from the group to talk to his familiar.

'What do you mean?' Harry hissed quietly.

'Sssomething sssmells wrong with the foresst.' Salazar hissed.

'Well a lot of dark creaturesss live here.' Harry replied.

'I hunt thisss foresst. Sssomething new isss here. Sssomething that sssmells foul. You musst be careful, tonight.' Salazar hissed.

Harry nodded his head and Salazar slithered back under his robes. Harry then sprinted to catch up to where Draco and Tonks were standing with Hagrid, Hermione, and Neville at a fork in the trail.

"Oh Harry there you are. I thought we lost you for a moment." Hagrid said.

"No, I just tripped." Harry said.

"Funny, I didn't here nuthin." Hagrid said as Draco and Tonks looked at him oddly.

"Yea, I got right back up." Harry said simply.

"Well here's what we are going to do. Neville, Hermione, and I are going to follow one trail. Harry, Nymphadora, Draco, and Fang will be following the other one. Now if you find the Unicorn fire up green sparks from your wand. If you get in any trouble, fire off red sparks." Hagrid said as everyone nodded their head.

Harry, Tonks, and Draco followed Fang down the trail to the right while Hagrid led Neville and Granger down the trail to the right.

"So you tripped, Harry?" Draco asked sarcastically once they were out of earshot.

"Er...well I was talking to Salazar." Harry admitted.

"Oh what did he want?" Tonks asked.

"Never mind that, Tonks. What is up with Hagrid calling you Nymphadora, and you not caring?" Harry asked desperately trying to avoid telling his already nervous friends that something evil was in the forest.

Tonks hit Harry over the head at the mention of her first name. "If you must know Harry, Hagrid was the only person at this school who would talk to me last year. He's actually really nice. Just don't eat any food he offers you." Tonks said.

"Wait so you are friends with that servant?" Draco asked astonished.

"Draco, Hagrid is really nice and he has a big heart. Before I had you two, he would be nice enough to hide me from or tell off the Weasley twins." Tonks said.

Harry felt a slight bit of appreciation to Hagrid for helping out Tonks.

"But you aren't going to be forcing me off topic, Harry, what did Salazar want?" Tonks asked.

"Oh well he just said something about an evil in the forest and to be careful." Harry said quickly.

Draco and Tonks stopped walking. "Do you want to run that by us again?" Draco asked.

"Ugh it's nothing guys really." Harry said hesitantly.

"No. What did he say, Harry?" Tonks demanded.

"Ok, he said that there was something evil in the forest and to be careful." Harry said.

"Oh well I could have told you that! I mean I heard that there is a vampire clan in here." Draco said.

Harry just nodded his head. He wasn't about to tell them that Salazar meant something a little worse than a vampire.

The three of them walked along the trail for a while until Tonks stopped and gasped. Harry and Draco stopped walking and asked what it was. Tonks took out her wand and said, "Lumos."

Her wand was pointed at a bush and Harry instantly saw the large globs of Silver liquid all over it.

"Unicorn Blood." Draco said weakly.

"Should we send up sparks?" Harry asked.

"No, Hagrid said to send up the sparks only if we found it." Tonks said.

"Ok so what do we do? The blood seems to travel off the path." Harry asked.

"We follow it stupid. Let's go the sooner we find the Unicorn the sooner we can get out of here." Draco said quickly.

Harry and Tonks nodded and the three of them all casted the lighting charm and they followed the silver blood through the dense trees of the forest. They seemed to be walking forever.

"Oh the poor thing, it must be near death. I mean it's lost so much blood." Tonks said sadly.

They continued to walk for a few more minutes before they spotted the creature. It was lying on its side and it wasn't breathing. It was the saddest and most beautiful thing Harry had ever seen. The Unicorn's silver hair seemed to reflect the moonlight. Harry saw that Draco and Tonks both had unshed tears in their eyes as they saw the dead creature.

"Alright I suppose we should send off th..." Draco said, but a sharp gasp from Tonks cut him off.

Harry's eyes widened when he saw something shuffle from behind the Unicorn. Harry looked on in horror as a cloaked figure rose his head up. The first thing Harry noticed were the pair of bright red eyes that were staring right at them. Harry felt like he was frozen to where he was standing. The cloaked figure leaned down to the Unicorn and started to drink up its blood.

"Merlin, a vampire." Draco said weakly.

"That's not a vampire stupid. Vampire's don't drink Unicorn blood." Tonks hissed quietly.

'Massster, you musselsst leave. That creature isss what sssmells wrong in the foressst.' Salazar hissed.

“Salazar says we should leave. That that thing is what smells wrong in the forest.” Harry said numbly.

Suddenly, the cloaked figure’s head shot up and stared right at Harry. The glowing red eyes seemed to instantly find him. Harry felt his blood run cold when he heard a low barely audible hiss seem to come from the cloaked figure. A single word left the things lips.

‘Potter.’

“We have to leave now!” Harry shouted.

Tonks instantly fired up red sparks while Draco made a bee line back to the trail.

Harry saw the cloaked creature stare at him for a second before it took off after Draco. Harry instantly used his shadow travel to race after Draco hoping to catch him before the creature.

Harry spotted Draco about a hundred feet ahead of him. Unfortunately, the creature was racing towards him also. Damn it even if I get to Draco first, I’ll never be able to get both he and Tonks out of the forest using my shadow form.

Harry made a very rash and a very stupid decision. He stopped chasing after Draco and instead headed for the creature.

When Harry got close, he noticed that the cloaked creature ran on two legs and that he had the build of a human. When Harry was only a few inches away from him, he dropped out of his shadow form and pointed his wand. “Diffindo, Diffindo, Diffindo, Expelliarmus.” Harry shouted.

Harry had never seen something move as quickly as the cloaked figure did. The thing dropped to the ground to avoid the four spells, which Harry fired at point blank range. The next thing Harry realized a leg shot out and tripped him. Harry fell to the ground and hit his head on a rock. He saw the creature rise up to his full height and look down at him. Harry was sure that he was going to die, but to his immense

shock the figure just turned around and sprinted away deeper into the forest.

Harry tried to sit up, but his head was throbbing. He felt the back of his head. When he looked at his hand, it was covered in blood. "Shit." Harry said as he started to get dizzy.

"Harry look out!" Tonks shouted.

Harry slowly turned his head in time to see a massive horse leap over a hedge. Harry's eyes widened when he saw that the horse had a body of a man. Harry's attention was shifted though to the large bow that the centaur had pointed at him.

"Get up, dark one!" The centaur hissed menacingly.

Harry scooted away from the centaur as fast as he could, but when an arrow shot out from trees and flew not an inch over his head, he stopped moving.

"I said get up, dark one!" The centaur said again.

Harry put his hands up in surrender as Tonks shot red sparks up again.

"Ahhh!" Tonks shrieked.

Harry turned around in time to see two other Centaurs striding forward with their bows pointed at her.

"Silence human. Ronan told you to get up, dark one!" The largest Centaur said sharply.

Harry climbed to his feet although he was woozy and his head was aching.

"Ronan kill the dark one!" The large Centaur said.

"NO!" Tonks shouted.

Harry watched in slow motion as the arrow left the Centaurs bow and traveled straight for his head. When the arrow was a foot from his face, Harry instinctively blended into the shadows and dove out of the way. It took Harry a few seconds to realize that the Centaurs were no longer firing arrows at him. He made to stand up, and it was only then that he realized that he had shifted to the Shadow Realm.

“SHOW YOURSELF!” The large Centaur screamed.

Not bloody likely! Harry thought viciously.

“Show yourself or we will kill the girl!” The large Centaur screamed again.

Harry felt a knife plunge into his heart. He couldn't lose Tonks. He felt himself fall out of his shadow form and he put his hands up.

“Fine! I'm here, just don't hurt her!” Harry said.

“Foolish Human. Ronan Kill the dark one!” The large Centaur said again.

“NO DON'T! HAGRID SAID WE WOULD BE HERE! WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?!” Tonks screamed with tears in her eyes.

Harry watched as the Centaur named Ronan took aim at him with his bow again. Harry closed his eyes. He was going to die by the hands of a bloody horse. Much to his shock though, the Centaur said, “I can not kill him Bane.”

Harry opened his eyes in shock.

“WHAT! He is dark! He killed the Unicorn, the stench of Darkness is all over him.” The Centaur said.

“Then why would he show himself at the threat of harm to his companion, Bane. Why would he sacrifice his life for her?” Ronan said.

“I didn't kill any Unicorn.” Harry said weakly.

"Lies! The smell of death is all over you, dark one!" Bane shouted.

"No, I-I fought the thing that attacked the Unicorn." Harry said weakly as he started to sway from side to side his head was now killing him.

"I believe the boy speaks the truth! The smell of darkness is fading from him, Bane." The other Centaur said.

"He must be using his magic then, Firenze!" Bane shouted.

"No Harry's telling the truth he didn't kill any Unicorn. We were helping Hagrid to find the Unicorn." Tonks yelled.

"That's right they were! Firenze, Bane, Ronan put your weapons down." Came the booming voice of Hagrid.

"I will do no such thing, this one reeks of darkness!" Bane said pointing at Harry.

"His smells lessons though, Bane. It is almost gone." Firenze said.

"Still he uses the shadows. He must be punished for that at least, it is the mark of darkness." Bane roared.

"You won't lay a hand on his head, Bane, not unless you want professor Dumbledore in this forest later tonight!" Hagrid roared.

Harry's was now starting to stumble and before he realized it he was falling. The last thing he heard was Tonks and Draco both shouting his name.

Hospital Wing, Hogwarts.

Harry awoke with a horrible headache.

"Welcome back Mr. Potter. I dare say I'm getting tired of seeing you in here this year." Madam Pomfrey said.

Harry reached over and put on his glasses. "What happened?" He asked.

"I believe that I can answer that, Mr. Potter."

Harry turned his head towards the hospital entrance in time to see Tonks, Draco, Dumbledore, McGonagall, and Snape striding into the hospital wing.

"How did I get here, Sir? The last thing I remember I was being attacked by some Centaurs." Harry said.

"Yes, I have spoken to Bane about his actions, Mr. Potter, and he assures me that it was an honest mistake. It appears that whatever was attacking and killing the Unicorns had a certain smell to it. Ms. Tonks informed us that you were involved in an altercation with the creature when it went to attack Mr. Malfoy. I believe that being in such a close proximity to the creature left its smell on you for a moment. The Centaurs recognized it and attacked you." Dumbledore said.

"Bloody horses with weapons." Harry muttered.

Tonks and Draco had to stifle their laughter as McGonagall and Dumbledore looked at Harry disapprovingly.

"Mr. Potter, I never should have allowed that sort of detention in the first place. When Hagrid asked for some help, I just told Filch to take a group of students who had detention. I didn't think that he would have chosen several first years and a second year." Dumbledore said.

"It's fine sir. I'm still here and there is no damage...WAIT HOW LONG WAS I OUT. I DIDN'T MISS THE LAST QUIDDITCH GAME DID I? OH MERLIN FLINT WILL KILL ME!" Harry shouted.

Dumbledore chuckled deeply, "Relax Harry, you've only been unconscious fourteen hours. I dare say that you still have plenty of time before your final Quidditch game. You are correct about Mr. Flint though. I think the entire school heard him cursing at breakfast when he found out you had been attacked by Centaurs during detention."  
A/N2 Read and Review people.

I've completed chapter 16 of this story, but my Beta still has Chapter 17 of Rise of Darkness.

Because this chapter is so short, I will try to post the next one fairly quickly. Enjoy everyone.

## CHAPTER 12

### Meeting The Dark Lord

The school year was coming to a close at Hogwarts, and that meant three things to the students Quidditch Cup, Finals, and Summer. Harry only cared about one of those things, the Quidditch Cup. Harry was not overly worried about his end of term exams. He knew he would be getting top marks in Transfiguration, Charms, and probably Defense. Potions wasn't going to be overly difficult. Draco was probably the best in the class and he had designed a perfect study guide for him. Besides if he brought the cup home to Slytherin, Snape might be a bit more lenient with him. Harry figured that he would have very good marks in both Herbology and Astronomy while he probably would be failing History of Magic.

One thing was for certain, Harry was not going to be running around freaking out like that idiot Hermione Granger. The girl was officially having a nervous breakdown. She even had the gall to ask him for his notes in Transfiguration. Harry remembered how he smirked and handed them to the girl. Three hours later, she had to return them because she couldn't understand the concepts he was talking about. Of course she just told him that she found someone with better notes. Harry actually laughed in her face at that blatant lie. He knew he had the best notes in Transfiguration and Charms. Hell, McGonagall and Flitwick made certain that he did, but they also made sure that he dived fully into the theory unlike the basic stuff that they taught to first years.

Truthfully for the first time, Harry and Draco saw what Hermione and Tonks saw in each other during the last month of school. The two of them were constantly in the library studying for their tests religiously. Tonks had gone completely Ravenclaw on them in a night. Harry never saw her without at least one text book even when she ate with them at diner.

Draco was taking the final month of school more like Harry. Well not that he really had a choice. Flint had managed to get Snape to book the pitch an astounding five days a week with a double practice on Saturday. Draco thought that the double practice on Saturday was Flint's way of getting Harry an extra practice since he didn't have

McGonagall or Flitwick's lessons on Saturday. Harry felt terribly bad for the fifth years Bole and Derik, who were going to most certainly be failing their Owls because of Flint's insane practice schedule.

Draco like Harry was already sure about what classes he'd be doing well in so studying wasn't high on his priorities. Draco was certain that he'd be tops in Potions as well as second to Harry in Defense and Transfiguration. Draco was decent at Charms, Herbology and Astronomy, and like Harry would be failing History of Magic.

Harry's private lessons with McGonagall and Flitwick were finally starting to get really interesting.

McGonagall had him working at a near break neck pace to get him halfway through second year Transfiguration before school let out. She had even extended their lessons past curfew the last three times just to insure that he had mastered inanimate object Transfiguration.

So far, Harry had no real difficulty with the subject matter; however, when McGonagall cancelled their lessons during his fight with Tonks, they fell behind schedule.

Flitwick though was the exact opposite of McGonagall, and he was taking it very easy on Harry these last few weeks. Flitwick claimed that Harry was already well past where he thought Harry was going to be the end of the year. When Harry disagreed and brought up the fact that he was still no where near able to animate a snitch, Flitwick actually laughed and told him that there weren't many seventh years that could do animation well enough to make a snitch. At seeing the shocked and hurt look on Harry's face, Flitwick explained that he was simply trying to motivate him. When he saw how truly down his student looked, Flitwick took out a golf ball and animated it with wings and gave it to Harry, who smiled and thanked his professor.

After accepting his goal of animating a snitch wasn't going to happen for a while, Harry realized just how well he was doing in charms. He had managed to fully animate a small plastic toy soldier, much to Flitwick's delight. During their last lesson, Flitwick had actually challenged Harry's soldier to a fight to the death against his own. What followed was fierce animation battle between several soldiers.

When they were finished, the limbs of several plastic soldiers were littering Flitwick's desk. Even though Flitwick's soldiers relentlessly slaughtered his own, it was still the most fun Harry had ever had in charms.

The only regret Harry did have about the school year was not following up with Quirrell about finding out more about Dumbledore. Somehow in the mess of making up with Tonks over Christmas, finding out information about his headmaster sort of slipped his mind. Harry thought about going to talk with Quirrell again before the last Quidditch match, but remembered that Quirrell didn't seem to know a lot about Dumbledore's grand-daughter anyway.

The day of the final Quidditch game for Slytherin finally came, and Harry was incredibly excited. Slytherin hadn't won the cup for the last seven years. The fact that they would be playing the Ravensclaws, the previous champions, made the game even more important. While they had completely crushed Hufflepuff and all but guaranteed winning the cup by points if it came to that, Flint wanted a perfect season.

"Are you ready?" Harry asked Draco as the two of them stood up to tremendous applause at the Slytherin table.

"You know it." Draco said with a grin.

"Good luck you two!" Tonks shouted above the cheering Slytherins. She was decked out in Slytherin green including her hair, which was silver with green streaks in it. She would be sitting with Blaise, Susan, and Hannah in the Slytherin stands.

"So nervous?" Harry asked as he and Draco walked down to the changing rooms.

"A little. Father was so proud of me after last game; I don't want to bollocks this one up, especially with the cup on the line." Draco admitted.

"Don't worry about it, Ravenclaw is terrible this year. Their reign at the top is over, and our dynasty is about to begin. Think about it

Draco, we have a shot to win the cup for seven straight years.” Harry said with a grin, which Draco returned.

“That’d be something. I don’t think it’s ever actually been done before.” Draco said with a grin.

The two boys entered the changing room where Flint was smoking out of a pipe and looked like he was on a dozen pepper up potions.

”FINALLY! IT’S ABOUT TIME YOU GET HERE! EVERYONE ELSE HAS BEEN HERE FOR AT LEAST,” he checked his watch, “FIVE MINUTES! NOW GET CHANGED.”

Draco and Harry grinned at Flint’s ridiculous nerves. They quickly changed and joined the rest of the team in their bright green uniforms.

“Alright you lot. This is it. This is what I’ve waited five years for. Slytherin hasn’t won the bloody cup in years. This is our time. Those bloody fucking Ravenclaws are nothing. Bole, Derik I want you to make them bleed. I want their bloody heads on a pike next to professor Snape’s office! Malfoy, you are the fastest and most agile chaser we’ve got so you’re going to be taking point. I want you to frustrate the hell out of those bookworms. Warrington, you will stop every single shot. Potter, you will catch that bloody snitch! I don’t care if you have to jump off your broom from five hundred feet. You will catch that snitch! Now who are we?” Flint screamed

“SLYTHERIN!” Everyone yelled.

”DAMN RIGHT! LET’S GO!” Flint said as he picked up his broom.

Harry and Draco followed Flint out of the changing room and they heard Lee Jordan’s magically enhanced voice.

”WELCOME WITCHES AND WIZARDS TO TODAYS QUIDDITCH MATCH BETWEEN THE SNAKES OF SLYTHERIN VESUS THE EAGLES OF RAVENCLAW! THE SLYTHERIN TEAM WILL BE ABLE TO CLINCH THE CUP TODAY WITH A WIN! THE STANDINGS FOR THIS YEARS CUP ARE AS FOLLOWS: IN FIRST PLACE WITH A

RECORD OF TWO WINS AND NO LOSES ARE THE SLYTHERINS...”

Harry did his best to tune out Jordan. Harry didn't care much for the Gryffindor announcer. Besides he was far too focused on the game. He wanted to end the match quick today. He wanted to hoist the cup and celebrate. So when Flint signaled for the team to land to prepare for the start of the game, Harry felt that it was about time.

Flint shook the hand of the Ravenclaw captain and Madam Hooch's whistle announced the start of the game.

Harry immediately started to search for the snitch; he noticed the Ravenclaw seeker, Cho Chang marking him very tightly. He decided to try a maneuver that Draco told him about. He flew up very high above the pitch and started to look around intensely. He then rocketed off towards the Ravenclaw goal post. He went fast enough so that it looked like he had seen that Snitch. He looked behind him and saw the Chang was racing after him. He heard Lee Jordan announce that he had seen the snitch.

When he got to one of the Ravenclaw goals he made several jerking movements to make it appear that the snitch was moving around erratically. He then went on a straight vertical dive. He went fast enough so that Chang was only a few feet behind him. As he neared the ground, Harry extended his right arm as if reaching for the snitch. Chang instinctively pushed her broom even harder to try to block him. When he was about ten feet from the ground, Harry put his hand back on his broom and pulled up with every ounce of strength he had. He managed to pull up just inches from the ground. Chang was not as fortunate as she plowed into the hard pitch going full speed.

Madam Hooch whistled an injury time out as Lee Jordan called Harry all sorts of terrible names for his treachery. His voice though was drowned out by the resounding cheers from the Slytherin section.

Madam Hooch signaled the Ravenclaw captain over. Harry watched as the Ravenclaw captain swore and made all sorts of angry hand gestures before Madam Hooch told him to get back on his broom.

A few moments later Cho was being levitated to the hospital wing by professor Flitwick, and Lee Jordan announced that Ravenclaw did not have a reserve seeker on their roster.

The Slytherin cheers were almost deafening. In one move, Harry had made sure that only he could end the game. The Ravenclaws didn't dare try to take him out now lest they be willing to play till their seeker recovered.

Madam Hooch signaled for the game to continue, but everyone knew it was already over. Draco, Flint, and Pucey were dominating the Ravenclaw chasers who had seemingly lost all hope at victory.

The score was 110-40 when Harry saw the Snitch floating some twenty feet below the Slytherin goal post. He flew over and snatched it out of the air without any trouble at all.

The Slytherin stands exploded with applause as Harry did a victory lap before landing at the center of the pitch for the cup presentation. When Harry landed, he was mugged by the entire team.

"THAT WAS AWESOME! NO ONE WOULD EVER SUSPECT A FIRST YEAR TO PULL THE WEINSKI FEINT!" Draco screamed.

"I would have to agree. Excellent flying, Mr. Potter!" Snape said with a huge grin plastered all over his face.

The sight of the most feared teacher in the school grinning like mad caused the entire Slytherin team to stare in shock. Only professor Dumbledore's voice seemed to refocus everyone's attention.

"IT IS MY DISTINCT HONOR TO GIVE THE HOGWARTS QUIDDITCH CUP TO THIS YEAR'S CHAMPIONS. SLYTHERIN HOUSE!" Dumbledore said as he handed the cup to professor Snape who accepted it with a massive grin.

Slytherin Common Room

The party started as soon as the team made it back to the common room. Harry who had never been to a Quidditch victory party was stunned at how insane it really was. The entire common room was

filled with food and drinks, clearly someone knew where the Kitchen was. Several older students offered Draco and him some butterbeer, which they gladly accepted. It was the best tasting thing Harry had ever had.

Flint was offering Draco something a little bit stronger later that night when professor Snape entered the common room. "I don't think my Godson needs any fire whisky Mr. Flint." Snape said.

Several people stopped and looked at Draco in shock. Harry was also surprised, not once during the entire year had Snape mentioned that Draco was his Godson, but here he was admitting it to the entire common room.

"Er sorry sir, but we are out of butterbeer, and he mentioned he was thirsty." Flint said sheepishly.

"So go down to the kitchen's and get some more butterbeer." Snape said.

Several students turned to look at him in shock. It was close to eleven o'clock, two hours past curfew.

"Sir are you aware of what time it is?" Flint asked hesitantly.

"Of course I am man! But are you Slytherins or not! Are you honestly telling me that you aren't able to get to the kitchens and back without getting into any trouble?" Snape asked.

"Sorry sir of course sir." Flint said.

"Potter, do you know where the kitchens are?" Snape asked.

"Er no sir I don't." Harry asked.

"Go to the portrait of the giant fruit bowl on the third floor, and tickle the pear. That is the entrance to the kitchens. Bring back enough butterbeer for everyone, and don't get caught." Snape said.

Harry's eyes bulged out of his head along with most the other Slytherins.

"What? Are you too much of a big shot after your Quidditch win to get the common room some butterbeer, Potter?" Snape asked darkly.

"No sir! Third floor...got it. I'll be back. Draco take Salazar" Harry said handing Salazar over to an apprehensive Draco. As Harry exited the common room still trying to figure out what had just happened, he came to only one logical conclusion. Snape had to have been drunk.

Harry shifted into his shadow form once he was far enough away from the common room. He quickly ascended the stairs to the third floor. He was about to turn the corner to where Snape had said the Kitchens were when he stopped. He swore he just saw someone enter the room with the giant three headed dog. Harry shook himself and continued towards the kitchens.

Harry arrived at the portrait Snape had mentioned and tickled the pear. The portrait actually giggled before it swung open. Harry stepped into the room and gasped. Running around everywhere, were hundreds of house elves. When the portrait closed, all the elves in the room stopped and looked at him with wide eyes. Harry was about to apologize for bothering them when eight elves ran over to him.

"What can we get for the young, master?" The elves asked quickly.

"Would you like some food?" An elf asked.

"Some tea?" Another asked.

"Perhaps some biscuits?" Yet another asked.

Deciding to file away this place for next year, Harry smiled and said, "Er actually there is a party in the Slytherin common room. We've run out of Butterbeer. Do you think you could go down there and bring more?" Harry asked.

"Oh yes young sir, we will do that right away." The elves said as several of them ran off.

"Well thank you. I guess I'll be heading out." Harry said.

"Are you sure you do not want anything?" The elf asked.

The smell of freshly baked rolls filtered through the air and Harry grinned. "I wouldn't mind one of those rolls." Harry said.

Soon one roll led to a bottle of butterbeer which led to a small chicken sandwich. Needless to say, Harry left the kitchens very satisfied thirty minutes later.

Harry was about to shift into his shadow form when he heard someone say, "You are sure that Ron said he was going into the room with the three headed dog."

"Y...yes...I-I tried to stop him, but he kept saying something about stopping Snape from getting the stone. Granger went with him; she put that blasted body bind on me."

Harry walked around the corner and raised an eyebrow when he saw Tonks and Neville standing near the door that led to the three headed dog.

"Tonks, what are you doing here?" Harry asked as he walked towards them.

"HARRY! WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE!" Tonks shouted.

"Not so loud damn it. It's passed curfew." Harry hissed.

"Well what are you doing here?" Tonks asked again.

"We ran out of butterbeer in the Slytherin common room. They sent me to get more from the kitchens." Harry said.

"Wait the kitchens are up here?" Tonks asked.

"Yea, but don't change the subject. What the hell are you and Longbottom doing up here? And what's this about Weasley going through that door! There is a bloody Cerberus in there." Harry said as he pointed to the door at the end of the corridor.

"You know about the dog! How?" Neville hissed.

"The question should be how do you know about it?" Harry asked.

"Ron and I hid from Filch in there the night Draco and you challenged us to a duel." Neville said.

"Ok, so why would he want to go in there, and what's this about Granger?" Harry asked.

"Well Ron was acting weird all day. After he came back from the Quidditch game, he actually started to panic when he couldn't find Snape. He was looking for him till curfew. Hermione and him seemed to think that Snape was trying to steal something." Neville said.

"That's stupid. Snape's drunk in the Slytherin common room." Harry said.

"He's drunk!" Tonks said in shock.

"Well he'd have to be to tell me where the kitchens are and to get more butterbeer two hours past curfew. Now Granger and Weasley went under the trap door I take it?" Harry asked.

"Yea looks like it. I don't know how they figured out how to get past the dog, but I found Neville in a full body bind thirty minutes ago in the Gryffindor common room." Tonks said.

"Weasley is a bloody idiot I swear to Merlin. I say let them both kill themselves. I mean there is no way that Dumbledore is protecting something using only a bloody dog. There have to be a ton of enchantment and things under that trap door." Harry said.

"Yea that's what we thought, but they are still down there. I'm so worried about Hermione, Harry." Tonks said.

"Well they made their bed, let them lie in it I say." Harry said as he started to walk away. He got about five steps before Tonks grabbed his arm.

"Harry? Can...Can you go get her. Please. Just see if she's alright. If she's hurt you can make it out using your..."

"Tonks." Harry hissed looking at Neville.

"Sorry, but please Harry, I don't want anything bad to happen to her." Tonks said as a tear fell from her face.

"Why Tonks? Why should I care about her." Harry asked.

"Because she's my friend, Harry, please." Tonks said as more tears started to fall.

Harry sighed, "Ok I'll go, but you two are going right to Dumbledore or McGonagall and telling them where we are. Got it. If she's hurt, I'll do my best to help her." Harry said.

"Harry that dog could kill you." Neville said weakly.

"I'm not worried about the dog, Neville. I already know about that. I'm worried about what is under that trap door." Harry said as he walked down the hallway and opened the door.

The first thing that Harry noticed was that the three headed dog was asleep, and that a harp was playing itself. Harry walked around the dog hoping to avoid waking it. He opened the trap door and much to his relief it was pitch black. He shifted into his shadow form and followed the wall downward. When he got to the base of the wall, he noticed that there was something moving on the floor. What the hell is that. I'm glad I didn't land in that stuff. Harry looked around the moving plant, which he eventually recognized as Devil's Snare. Harry was glad that he didn't see Hermione's body strangled to death. Weasley well he couldn't give a damn about.

He followed the hallway still in his shadow form until he reached a room with thousands of flying keys. The room wasn't dark enough for him to maintain his shadow form, and he dropped back to the physical realm. He walked over to the door and noticed that it was locked. Just great which key is it? How the hell did a pair of idiots like Weasley and Granger even get this far.

Harry noticed a pair of school brooms sitting in the corner, but smirked when he saw a key that was barely able to fly from two broken wings. The key was flying a few feet lower than the rest and Harry mounted the broom and snatched it easily. As soon as he took the key though, all the other keys went ballistic and started to attack him. Harry threw his hands over his face and raced towards the door. He pushed the key into the door and turned the handle.

Harry stepped into the next room and gasped. He was staring at the largest chest set he had ever seen. The white pieces all turned to him when he entered the room. Harry was horrendous at chess, so he grinned like mad when he noticed how poorly lit the room was. In fact the only light coming from the entire room was from a single levitating torch in the center of the chess set. I bet they did that to make it harder to see the black pieces. If you can't see where your opponent is, it's harder to defeat them. Harry shifted into the Shadow Realm and just bypassed the entire task by racing around the walls. He was pleased the next door had a gap under it to let him pass into the next room.

As soon as Harry passed into the next room though, he was ripped from the Shadow realm as the room was very brightly lit. He let out a yelp of pain followed by a gasp as he saw a massive Mountain Troll that was lying dead on the ground in front of him. Harry just shook his head. How the bloody hell did Weasley and Granger do that to a Troll that size.

As Harry walked past the Troll, he noticed the next room was blocked off by a pillar of blue fire. Harry pushed the Troll's club into the fire and then withdrew it. He noticed that there was no scorch mark on the Troll's club. Harry took a deep breath and then stepped through the fire. He was rather surprised that it didn't burn at all. When he entered the room, the first thing he saw was Weasley walking towards him.

"POTTER, I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN THAT YOU'D BE HERE TO HELP SNAPE STEAL THE STONE!" Ron yelled as he drew his wand.

Harry took out his own wand and shouted, "Expelliarmus!"

The disarming spell struck Weasley in the chest and he flew backwards into the wall. Harry snatched his wand out of the air and smirked. "Ok first of all Weasley, I'm not here to steal any bloody stone. Now where is Granger! I need to get her and get out of here!" Harry said sharply.

"You are a lying bastard, Potter. I'm not going to help you!" Ron yelled.

Harry felt his rage start to boil over at the idiotic boy. He didn't even want to be in this godforsaken place. "Listen up you idiot! Tonks found Neville and released the body bind on him! She asked me to come here and make sure Hermione isn't hurt! Dumbledore will be here in a few minutes hopefully so just tell me where Granger is!" Harry yelled.

"I don't believe you." Ron said indignantly.

Whatever was left of Harry's temper officially dissipated. "Diffindo!" Harry yelled pointing his wand at Weasley's chest. His cutting spell shot out and hit Weasley directly in his chest causing Ron to let out a shriek of pain.

"Tell me where Granger is you bloody idiot!" Harry yelled.

"G-G-Go to hell!" Ron said.

"Diffindo!" Harry shouted again this time pointing it at Weasley's leg. The spell struck him in the thigh as Weasley screamed again.

"Next one is going to take off your bits! Now where is she!" Harry threatened.

"She went through the other fire. She drank the littlest potion bottle and just walked through the black fire. She...she told me to drink another one of the potions to go out the other way, but I forgot which one it was." Ron said quickly.

Harry snorted, "You really are a bloody idiot, Weasley." Harry said as he turned away from the boy and found the smallest potion bottle. There wasn't much left of the potion. He quickly drank whatever was left and ran through the black fire.

The first thing that Harry realized when he entered the next room was that it was a lot bigger than the room that he had last been in. The other thing he noticed was Hermione on the ground blood flowing from her head and side.

"Damn, Tonks is going to kill me!" Harry swore as he started to walk forward.

"Ah, Mr. Potter. I never thought I'd see you here tonight. The Quidditch victory party ended early did it?"

Harry whirled around and his eyes widened when he saw Quirrell smirking at him as he stood next to an all too familiar mirror.

"Professor Quirrell? What are you doing here?" Harry asked in shock.

"I am here to get the stone for my master, Potter. What exactly are you doing here?" Quirrell asked.

Harry just numbly pointed to Hermione.

"The mudblood? Mr. Potter I was of the impression you didn't care much for their kind?" Quirrell asked.

"I don't. I'm here because Tonks does care about what happens to that one!" Harry said pointing to Hermione.

"Ah, yes, Ms. Tonks, a half-blood. Interesting company you seem to keep, Mr. Potter. Too bad that you have to die." Quirrell said as he raised his wand.

Harry drew his own wand, but was shocked to see Quirrell fall to the floor in agony. Harry's confusion was only compounded when Quirrell started to scream.

"I'm sorry master. I-I forgot myself, please, mercy." Quirrell yelled.

Harry's eyes rose slightly when he heard another voice answer Quirrell.

"Let me ssspeak to him."

"No, Master you aren't strong enough." Quirrell said weakly.

"LET ME SSPEAK!" The voice said louder.

Harry was still trying to figure out what was happening. Quirrell was trying to get some stone to give to his master. Who is his master? And where the hell was that other voice coming from?

Harry watched as Quirrell slowly took off his turban. When the entire turban was off his head, Quirrell turned around. Harry wanted to scream when he saw a face in the back of Quirrell's head.

'Harry Potter.' The head said.

Harry instantly recognized that the thing or person in the back of Quirrell's head had just spoken in parseltongue.

'Who are you?' Harry asked quickly.

The face just smiled. 'You know who I am, Harry Potter. After all, I tried to kill you and gave you that scar.'

Harry gasped and took a step back. 'Voldemort?'

"Correct, Harry Potter. Do you ssssee what I have become. The curssse that sssshould have killed me, could not. Inssstead I wasss ripped from my body. Unicorn blood hassss ssstrengthened me though. When I have the sssstone, I sssshall return.' Voldemort said.

Harry was still trying to grasp the fact that his parent's murder was still somehow alive, and was the same person who he saw drinking the Unicorns blood, but all that came out of his mouth was, 'What isss thisss bloody ssstone everyone wantsss?'

Harry was shocked to see Voldemort chuckle and revert to English. "The Philosopher's Stone, Mr. Potter. It will turn any object into pure gold as well as produce the elixir of life making the drinker immortal!"

Harry gasped, "Merlin."

'You intrigue me, Harry Potter.' Voldemort said reverting to parseltongue.

'What do you mean?' Harry asked.

'I could have killed you ssso easssily this year. While you played Quidditch, or that time in the foressst, but you intrigue me so very much. You are a parsssel tongue. You are in Ssslytherin, I still haven't quite figured out that little trick you did to get the drop on me in the foresssst, and finally you have no qualms about protecting your sssecretssss. Essssentially, you remind me of me.' Voldemort hissed.

'I-I...iss that why you made me your heir?' Harry asked.

Harry noted that Voldemort's face seemed to show only absolute confusion.

'What do you mean? I did not name you my heir?' Voldemort hissed.

'Luciusss Malfoy ss said you were the lassst heir of Ssslytherin. I had a blood purity tesssst performed on me, and it ss said I wasss the magical heir of Ssslytherin.' Harry hissed.

Voldemort looked confused for a second before a smile broke on his face. 'Of coursse it iss sssso ssssimple. The failed cursse. You mussst have received ssssome of my powerssss when it failed. That iss why you are a parsssel tongue, and my heir.' Voldemort hissed a smile on his lips.

'Sssso it wasss an accident?' Harry hissed menacingly.

'Yesss, but you are ssstill my heir. Tell me doesss Dumbledore know?' Voldemort smirked.

"NO!" Harry shouted in English.

Voldemort laughed at Harry's reaction 'Ssso much like me, you alssso do not trussst the headmassster. That is wissse you sssshouldn't. He will only offer you empty promissesss and half truthsss.' Voldemort hissed.

'I don't trussst him because he made me live with the Dursssley's after you murdered my parentsss!' Harry hissed darkly.

'I do apologize for your parentssss deaths. They refussssed to join me and tried to kill me and my followers. I could not let that go unpunissshed.' Voldemort hissed.

'I...I...I underssstand why you killed them. I don't know why they ever cared about mugglessss. Mugglesss are filth, I will kill the Dursssleyssss ssssome day.' Harry started to rant before he could stop himself.

'Dursssleys?' Voldemort hissed curiously.

Harry hesitated for a moment and Voldemort's red eyes burned bright.

'I take it your relativesss did not treat you well.' Voldemort hissed with a smirk.

Harry was shocked that Voldemort was able to figure it out. 'No. They did not.' Harry hissed.

'We are very much alike, Harry. I alssso grew up with mugglesss although in an orphanage. I begged Dumbledore every year at Hogwartsss to ssstay during the ssssummer, and he alwayssss refusssed. When I returned to the orphanage, the other boysss would try to harm me.' Voldemort hissed darkly.

'It wasss you! You are the one who told me everything about Dumbledore!' Harry hissed in realization.

'You are very quick young ssserpent. Yesss it wasss I possssessssing Quirrell. Why do you have sssuch an interessst in the old headmassster?' Voldemort asked curiously.

'No reassson, we are both trasssfiguration gifted.' Harry hissed quickly.

'Yesss, you have many talentsss Harry, but your lying needsss work. Why are you ssso interesssted in Dumbledore?' Voldemort asked again this time Quirrell's body took a step backwards bringing Voldemort's face closer to Harry's.

'I...I...' Harry was frantically trying to think of a better lie.

'He isss your great-great grandfather...how very interesssting. He issss your blood yet he left you to ssstay with mugglesss. He ssseeksss to control you, Harry. He will try to manipulate you by giving you a sssmall taste of freedom, but hisss goal is to make you reliant on him. He issss cruel, Harry. I would never treat you sssso poorly.' Voldemort hissed.

'You tried to kill me!' Harry hissed defiantly.

'How long would you have lived after I killed your parentsss, Harry. Your housse wasss falling down around you from the battle I had with your mother and father. You had no one willing to take you in obvioussssly ass you were ssent to live with mugglesss. You would have ssstarved to death. The Avada Kedavra wasss quick and merciful. Besssidesss, can you honestly ssssay that your life at your relativesss wasss better then death?'

Harry froze he had never thought about it like that. When he found out about how Voldemort killed his parents he always wanted to know why he tried to kill him. Mercy? He was showing me mercy? Was it? I mean someone had to have found me after the curse deflected so someone had to have cared, right? But then Dumbledore took me to

the Dursley. Why would he do that if he really cared about me? Voldemort's right death would have been better than the Dursleys at least than I would have been with my parents.

'Sso now you understand? Now you understand why I tried to kill you?' Voldemort asked with a smile.

Harry just nodded his head. He couldn't deny the logic that Voldemort's presented.

'Sso now, Harry. Will you help me get the stone?' Voldemort asked.

'What? Oh the stone...er why don't you already have it? The tasks were sso simple.' Harry asked.

'Dumbledore never does anything simple. All those little things were just to stall for time. I believe he had an alarm on the trap door to alert him of someone entering. The real challenge is this mirror. Now what do you know about it?' Voldemort demanded.

Harry took a step back away from the mirror. 'I-I will not look into the mirror!'

Voldemort looked perplexed for a moment. 'Why not?'

'Because of what it will show me. That mirror shows our greatest desire, and I can not stand to look at something that can not happen.' Harry said quickly.

'Ahh your parents.' Voldemort said.

Harry just nodded sadly.

'You should not miss them, Harry. They fought for people that treated you horrible.' Voldemort hissed.

'I-I-I....' Harry said.

'Harry I believe we can help each other.' Voldemort hissed as a smile crossed his face.

'What do you mean?' Harry asked.

'I need the ssstone, but can not get it. You can look into the mirror, but are afraid too. I can help you to overcome your fear. In return, you will get me the ssstone.' Voldemort hissed joyfully.

'Er...I...I...I don't...'

"Imperio!"

Harry couldn't dodge the curse. Voldemort was too close to him already. The curse struck him in the head, but Harry felt no ill effects it was like soaking into a warm bath. Get the stone from the mirror. A voice called out in his mind.

Why?

Why shouldn't you?

I don't like that mirror, I don't want to see my parents.

Who cares about that let's just get the stone and then we can break the mirror.

Yes, yes that's a good idea.

Harry walked over to the gigantic mirror. Once again he saw himself standing in front of his loved ones. They were waving to him. Tonks was kissing him on the cheek again.

What do you see! The voice demanded.

"I see myself and the people I love." Harry replied.

What about the stone!

"I don't see a stone." Harry said numbly.

There was a sudden crashing sound from behind him. I should see what that is, it could be important.

You could, but why?

Good point. What should I do then? Just standing here doesn't seem to make a lot of sense.

Well what else would you be doing besides standing here?

I don't know, I should probably be checking on Hermione.

Why? She's just a stupid mudblood after all.

But Tonks wanted me to make sure she was ok.

And if Weasley hadn't delayed you, you might have been able to help her. This is his fault. You have done nothing wrong.

You're right. I did everything right. Tonks can't be mad at me.

'HARRY ATTACK DUMBLEDORE!' A powerful voice hissed in his head.

Harry turned around and looked at the strangest sight he'd ever seen. Dumbledore had his wand pointed at the back of professor Quirrell's head. For some reason this bothered him a lot.

'Dumbledore made you live with those muggles, make him pay.' The powerful voice hissed again.

Harry raised his wand and shouted, "Diffindo!" The cutting curse shot out of his wand and struck the old professor in the shoulder. Harry watched as Dumbledore whirled around to face him.

"HARRY! Fight him!" Dumbledore shouted.

'Harry, kill him, you know the wordsss! Think about all the pain the Dursssley'sss did to you and then ssssay the wordsss!' The hissing voice said again.

Suddenly, Harry thought about all the times his uncle had beat him and shoved him in his cupboard with no food. All the times Dudley and his gang had punched, kicked, and hit him with rocks. He thought about all the times aunt Petunia yelled at him for being a freak. All the times his aunt Marge had called his parents low life degenerates. All the pain was beginning to overwhelm him as he relived all the horrible things that the Dursleys' had done to him. Harry looked up at Dumbledore, and at that moment all Harry wanted was revenge. It was Dumbledore who forced him to live with the Dursleys; it was Dumbledore who never checked up on him, and it was Dumbledore who was to blame for ten years of hell. Harry quickly raised his wand.

"AVADA KEDAVRA!" Harry said as he put all his hatred and pain into the spell.

Dumbledore's eyes widened as the bright green light rocketed out of Harry's wand. It was about to strike when Dumbledore duct and yelled, "Expelliarmus!"

Dumbledore's spell smashed into Harry with such force that it caused him to fly backwards at a breakneck speed, and slam into the giant mirror. Harry's momentum caused the mirror to completely shatter. Harry felt a terrible pain as the pieces of glass struck him in the back and neck. He felt like a fog was being lifted from his mind, but as the world got clearer, the more pain he was in. Harry felt blood gushing out of his back and neck. He was getting cold. He could feel himself slipping away. He heard a horrible scream and then he blacked out.

&&&

Harry looked around. Where was he? Everything was completely black. He tried to tap into his shadow mage talents, but they didn't work. He looked around. What was this place?

"Hello?" Harry called only to hear his own voice echo all around him.

Harry saw a snitch flying above him. He jumped up to catch it, but it was too high.

"I need a broom." Harry thought out loud.

A broom materialized next to him. Harry smiled and took off after the Snitch. It seemed though that no matter how high or fast he flew, the Snitch kept flying higher and remained of reach. Getting upset, Harry pushed his broom as fast as he could. He was about to grab the Snitch when his eyes opened and he took a deep breath.

"MR. POTTER! MR. POTTER CAN YOU HEAR ME!"

Harry's head was spinning. "What happened to the Snitch?" Harry asked.

"HARRY, THANK MERLIN YOU'RE ALRIGHT." A girl yelled.

Harry just felt like going back to sleep, he was exhausted.

"Harry, we brought you Salazar." Another voice said.

'Massster, massster are you ok?' A familiar hissing asked.

"Harry can you say anything?" A concerned voice asked.

"What happened to the snitch? I almost had it." Harry said.

"He's delirious, headmaster." Said an unfriendly voice.

"Harry, do you remember going after the stone? Do you remember what happened?" A sympathetic voice asked.

Suddenly hundreds of memories started to assault him. "Stone? Immortality? Yea, Voldemort wanted it. We talked. He really isn't as bad as everyone says. He can talk to snakes too you know." Harry said before passing out again as everyone in the room gasped loudly. A/N Review people Review. Love it Hate it?

A/N2 This will be my last update until after I finish reading the seventh book.

A/N3 The next chapter will officially close out Harry's first year at Hogwarts.

## CHAPTER 13

### Year's End

Harry woke up in the hospital wing some time later.

'Massster you have finally awoken.'

Harry looked down. Coiled in a ball on his stomach was Salazar.

'Hello Sssalazar. How long have I been unconssscioussss?' Harry asked.

'Two daysss. You and the muggleborn you dissslike have both been asleep for sssometime.' Salazar hissed.

Harry turned his head and only then noticed a few people standing around a bed talking loudly. He saw professor McGonagall talking very adamantly with the two older people.

They were now starting to yell and Harry couldn't help, but hear their conversation.

"NO! Hermione will not be staying in this school! The headmaster told us she could have died! He said she lost most the blood in her body! Emma and I will be pulling her out immediately." An angry man shouted.

"Mr. Granger, please, what happened was a very rare occurrence. The room your daughter entered was completely off limits. The headmasters warned all the students that it was dangerous and should not have been entered at any cost." McGonagall said quickly.

"Then why was my little girl in there! Another boy came by and told us that she was really scared the night she went after that stone thing. He said she cursed him to get to that room. I don't like what this school has done to my little girl!" The other woman shouted.

Harry was suddenly fighting the urge to get up and kiss the two Muggles. Thank Merlin, the mudblood is gone! Her parents are going

to be pulling her out of school and taking her back to where she belongs! It's about blood time too.

While Harry continued to smile as he listened to McGonagall try to convince the Grangers not to pull their daughter out of Hogwarts, a far less happy thought entered his head. Oh bloody hell, Tonks isn't going to like the mudblood leaving. But it's out of my hands, I can't change her parent's minds it's their decision. So what if I'm glad she'll be leaving. Although I have to say, getting past all those little tasks the professors set up did impress me. Who cares so did I though. Damn it no I didn't, I cheated. I used my Shadow Mage ability and just skipped most the tasks. The only ones I didn't use it on was catching that key with the broom, and beating up Weasley to find the right potion.

"Please Mrs. Granger; Hermione is one of the best students in my class. I'm sure her friends will be upset to see her go." McGonagall said.

"What friends? Our daughter spent most of Christmas crying because she felt alone in this place. We agreed that she should stick it out the rest of the year, but we were clearly wrong." Mr. Granger shouted.

Harry wanted nothing more than to just stay silent or maybe show Mr. and Mrs. Granger just how little he thought of their daughter. Instead he opened his mouth and said, "That's not true, she has friends."

The three adults whirled around to stare at him.

"Mr. Potter you're awake! Thank Merlin, we were so worried when you fell back asleep and didn't wake up." McGonagall said quickly abandoning the Grangers and walking over towards him.

"Potter! Our daughter mentioned you in her letters. She said that you hated her. That you made her life miserable at this place!" Mrs. Granger said sharply.

"Yes, I don't like your daughter at all. To be honest, I hope that you do remove her from Hogwarts, but she does have friends. I should know, my best friend is one of them." Harry said.

The Grangers just stared at him in shock. "B...but she told us your friends were horrible to her." Mr. Granger said in shock.

"Yes well Draco and I do our best to make her life...difficult." Harry said choosing his words carefully at seeing the angry look McGonagall was giving him. "That doesn't change the fact that my best friend, Tonks, really does like your daughter. They've been friends since October. I would also venture a guess and say that the boy your daughter cursed, Neville Longbottom, considers her a friend as well. I personally don't know why, but he does."

"Mr. Potter perhaps you should stop speaking too the Grangers. You were placed under the Imperious Curse and that glass caused you to lose a lot of blood, you should be resting." McGonagall said.

Is that what that curse was? I'll have to read to find out exactly what it was suppose to do. "I feel fine, professor. Now as much as I loath to say it, Mr. and Mrs. Granger. Your daughter did something rather impressive when she went to stop Voldemort from getting the stone." Harry said

"Voldemort we were told that it was a mad professor named Quirrell?" Mrs. Granger said.

"Mr. Potter was cursed by Professor Quirrell much like your daughter was, Mrs. Granger. Only instead of hurting him physically it affected his ability to recall the events correctly." McGonagall said shooting Harry a 'go along with that' look.

"Er right, sorry. I guess I just got confused for a second, but it doesn't change the fact that your daughter displayed some rather impressive magic to get where she was." Harry said.

"What do you mean?" Mr. Granger asked curiously.

"To get to confront Quirrell, she had to get past a very large Cerberus, a huge cluster of Devil's Snare, find the correct enchanted key to open a door, defeat a massive chest set, get past a mountain troll,

and drink the correct potion to bypass an enchanted fire.” Harry said as he reveled in the shock on the Grangers’ faces.

”Hermione did all that!” Mrs. Granger said shocked.

”Well she certainly won’t be coming back!” Mr. Granger shouted.

”Are you daft, Muggle!” Harry raged.

”MR. POTTER!” McGonagall shouted in shock.

”Sorry, professor, its just they can’t even see how impressive Hermione was to do what she did. Hell I hate Granger, but I can still admit what she did was impressive. As loathed as I am to admit it, she has talent.” Harry said reluctantly.

This statement seemed to throw the Grangers for a loop.

”Hell just let Granger stay for final exams. Look at her grades when they are done. For all that the little mud...muggleborn studies, I’m sure she’ll have excellent grades. If you think she performed poorly then take her out, hell I’ll reimburse you for this first year’s entire tuition if you do decide to take her out of school” Harry said with a grin.

McGonagall and the Grangers just stared at him in shock.

”V-very well. We’ll let her stay for the rest of the year. If she does as well as he says she will, then she’ll come back.” Mr. Granger said.

”Thank you.” A weak voice said from across the room.

HERMIONE!” Mrs. Granger shouted as she ran over to her daughter and brought her into a hug.

Harry just rolled his eyes. He did not want to see the happy reunion of a mudblood and her parents.

For her part, Minerva McGonagall was unsure what to think of the young gifted transfigurist. On one hand, he had just convinced the

Grangers to leave their daughter in school, something she had been arguing with them about for the last two hours. On the other hand though, his Freudian slip with the term mudblood and the derogatory way he had referred to Mr. Granger as 'Muggle' had her deeply troubled. It seemed that there was more to Mr. Potter than she had ever thought. She eyed Harry for a few more minutes before she said, "I will alert Poppy and the headmaster that you are awake, Mr. Potter."

Harry just nodded his head and went back to sleep.

&&&

Harry woke up later that night. He turned his head and was rather annoyed to see Granger staring at him from her bed.

"What!" He barked in annoyance.

"Why did you do it?" Hermione asked.

"What save you?" Harry asked.

"Yes, that and talk to my parents." Hermione said.

"First, I saved you because Tonks asked me too, end of story. I talked to your parents because Tonks would have been upset if you didn't come back. For the life of me, I don't know why she's your friend, but she is, and I don't want her upset. Besides, you got past all the little tasks set up guard the stone and that impressed me. I do have one question for you, though. How did you figure out that the stone was at Hogwarts?" Harry asked nonchalantly although he was truly interest.

"Oh, I went to stop Neville and Ron from dueling you that night when you and Draco challenged them. I was actually the one who spotted the trap door. When I was talking to Hagrid with Tonks before Christmas, he mentioned Nicholas Flamel. I heard Ron say that he overheard Snape threatening Quirrell one day in the common room, and I told him what Hagrid had told me. I eventually figured out what Flamel was famous for, and Ron swore that with all of Slytherin

partying after your win no one would miss Snape trying to go after the stone. We were wrong apparently about Snape.” Hermione admitted.

Harry just nodded his head, but didn’t say anything else.

“Did you mean what you said about me having talent?” Hermione asked.

Harry glared at the bushy haired girl with annoyance. “You got past all the obstacles that Dumbledore put into place.” Harry said simply.

”But so did you.” Hermione said weakly.

“Well in case you haven’t noticed, Granger, I have talent.” Harry replied sarcastically.

“Thank you.” Hermione said.

“Don’t thank me; I still hope you fail every one of your exams, and your parents pull you out.” Harry said in tone that said the conversation was over.

&&&

Harry was released from the Hospital four days later after madam Pomfrey said his injuries were all healed. So that he didn’t fall behind on his end of year exams, Dumbledore got his teachers to give him the written portion of their finals while he was still in the hospital wing. Harry just rolled his eyes at both the Charms and Transfigurations tests. They were so easy he burst out laughing at the questions halfway through the test, much to the annoyance of Granger who was frantically writing till the end. His two favorite teachers also said that Professor Dumbledore appeared before the board of Governors on his behalf. Lucius Malfoy and the other governors agreed that since Harry was well beyond the first year practical final exam in his private lessons that it would be rather pointless for him to be held back a day into summer vacation to take the practical part of the exam.

Harry smiled brightly as he remembered the enraged look on Granger's face when she heard about his exemption from the practical.

Harry had several visitors stop by. Blaise and Susan showed up a few times and wished him well. Draco and Tonks seemed to live in the hospital wing with him. Professor Snape even showed up, but he was not at all the happy person that Harry remembered after they won the Quidditch cup. Draco actually explained why Snape was so happy that night one day.

::Flashback::

"Harry, glad to see you're up and going again. How do you think you did on History of Magic. I'm quite sure I'm going to be failing that one." Draco said with a grin.

"Oh yea, I'll be failing it right along with you, Draco." Harry said with a smile.

"I saw Snape leaving. Was he wishing you well?" Tonks asked.

"Nah, he was just telling me not to expect him to curve my Potions test because of my hospitalization. I swear I like Snape a lot more when he's drunk." Harry said.

"Er well about that Harry. Snape wasn't drunk in the common room that night." Draco said with a grin.

"What are you talking about, Draco. You saw him. He was smiling for Merlin's sake." Harry said.

"Well my father actually explained it to me a few days ago. Apparently father and Snape were sitting together during the last game. After you took out Chang and everyone knew we had the game won, my father poured them both a glass of Fire Whisky. What he didn't tell my Godfather though was that he put several powerful cheering potions into both their drinks." Draco said with a grin.

Tonks and Harry just burst out laughing.

"Your dad drugged him! That's too funny!" Harry said as he roared with laughter.

"Draco, Snape's a Potions master though, shouldn't he have been able to smell the potion?" Tonks asked once she stopped laughing.

"Well father usually adds an anti-hangover potion to all his drinks and apparently the two smell similar. Since my Godfather had been by the Manor for several parties, he didn't question the smell." Draco said with a grin.

::End Flashback::

"So Blaise what are you going to be up to this summer?" Draco asked with a smirk.

Blaise colored slightly and said, "Well my mother and father decided that we would be spending a lot of time down south by the beach." Blaise replied.

"Oh that's interesting, Blaise. I was talking to Susan and she said that she was planning on doing something similar this summer." Harry said with a grin.

"Sod it, Potter." Blaise said as Harry, Tonks, and Draco laughed.

"So Harry when do you think you'll be able to make it to the manor." Draco asked with an evil glint in his eye.

Harry shook his head sadly, "Well, my plan to introduce my relatives to my shadow friends won't be happening this summer. So I don't know." Harry said quietly.

"WHAT! Why in Merlin's name not?" Draco asked. "Draco I've had no practice in that particular aspect of my talent. Maybe next summer I'll be able to do it." Harry said sadly.

"Well at least you've got Salazar to keep those bastards from bothering you too much." Tonks said darkly.

"Yea, I told Salazar what they were like. He's been looking forward to finally having someone he can scare." Harry said with a grin.

"I hope he does a little more than that." Draco said darkly.

"Mr. Potter, the headmaster wishes to speak with you."

Harry turned around to see Snape looking rather annoyed.

"Yes, sir." Harry said as he got up.

"Don't forget Salazar, Harry." Draco said.

Harry could have smacked himself. After Voldemort was able to read his mind so easily, Harry had been taking Salazar everywhere with him. Hell he was even sleeping with him around his neck. Harry still hadn't told anyone about his little conversation with the Dark Lord. He didn't think telling people that Voldemort was not only still alive but that he made a lot of good points would be smart.

"Thanks Draco." Harry said with a smile.

Harry followed Snape out of the Great Hall and down several winding corridors. Finally they stopped in front of a large statue of a Gargoyle. "Lemon Sorbet." Snape said with annoyance.

Lemon Sorbet... that's the Headmasters password is the man mad? Harry thought.

Harry's eyes widened. How the hell did he do that?

Snape opened the door and Harry walked in behind him. The first thing Harry noticed was that the office was cluttered with hundreds of tiny little gadgets that were making funny sounds. Harry saw a large red bird perched next to the Headmaster's desk.

The bird chirped when they entered, and Harry looked at it curiously.

"Take a seat, Mr. Potter. Severus that will be all. Thank you for getting Mr. Potter for me." Dumbledore said.

Harry took a seat in front of Dumbledore's desk while Snape exited the room.

"Ah, Harry finally we get a chance to have a little talk. You know I always like to talk to as many students as I can, but every year passes just so quickly. Would you like a Lemon Drop?" Dumbledore asked as he extended a little bowl of candy.

Remembering what Draco said about his father drugging Snape with a friendly glass of Fire Whisky, Harry declined the headmaster's offer. He still wasn't sure what to make of the ancient wizard. A part of him firmly believed what Voldemort had told him, about Dumbledore trying to control him. After all, he had made him live at the Dursleys; however, another part of him wanted to trust the smiling older wizard. If Dumbledore didn't know that he was his great great grandfather, then leaving him with his relatives would make sense.

"Well Harry. I was wondering what you thought of your first year at Hogwarts. Was it everything you expected?" Dumbledore asked with a grin.

"I certainly didn't expect to meet Voldemort if that's what you mean." Harry said cutting through all the small talk.

"Ah, yes it was a terrible thing what happened to you and Ms. Granger. Lord Voldemort has manipulated many people in his life, Harry, and professor Quirrell was no different." Dumbledore said.

"Sir what happened after you knocked me out? I tried to ask professor McGonagall, but she wouldn't tell me." Harry asked.

"Ah yes, well after I had to subdue you, and I'm sorry that I had to take such drastic measures to do so Harry. I fear that in my haste to remove you as a threat, I forgot that you were just a child. I never should have used that spell against you and for that I'm terribly sorry. I must tell you I have never been as worried for a student as I was for you when you were unconscious." Dumbledore said.

Harry didn't say anything. The fact that Dumbledore was admitting a mistake was something, but it wasn't anything he wanted to know.

Seeing that Harry wasn't going to say anything, Dumbledore continued. "As you asked, after I incapacitated you. I killed Quirrell who was being possessed by Voldemort at the time. Unfortunately, Voldemort left Quirrell's body when he was dying and I was unable to do any harm to him. Voldemort fled the school and I could not pursue him as I had to get you and Ms. Granger to the hospital wing immediately.

Harry nodded his head in acceptance of that.

"Harry I want to talk to you about what you said to us about Voldemort when you woke up." Dumbledore said his tone turning very serious.

Harry's eyes widened. "What?"

"When you first woke up, Harry, you were highly delirious; however, you did managed to say that you and Voldemort talked and that he wasn't as bad as everyone made him out to be. You also said that he was a parseltongue like yourself." Dumbledore said sadly.

"I-I-I don't remember that at all." Harry said in shock.

"That does not surprise me much. You were not in the best mental state, and you past out moments after. What does concern me though is whether you truly believe that." Dumbledore said.

"I-I don't. I mean Voldemort killed my parents. Why would I like him." Harry said hoping that his lie would fool Dumbledore.

Harry felt the all too familiar tingle against his mind for a moment and Salazar started hissing to him in anger. Harry narrowed his eyes at Dumbledore.

"Stay out of my mind." Harry said darkly.

Dumbledore looked absolutely stunned that he had been caught. "Merlin, Harry are you a natural Occulmens?" Dumbledore asked in shock.

"I don't know, but you will stay out of my mind or I'll be informing Draco's father of both your and professor Snape's actions." Harry said menacingly.

Dumbledore looked like he didn't like where this conversation was starting to go. "I'm sorry Harry. I'm a rather powerful Legilimens and sometimes my curiosity just gets the better of me. I apologize. I never meant to violate your personal space."

"Legilimens?" Harry asked curiously though still on edge.

"It's the art of entering someone's mind, Harry. The defense to it is Occulmency. You seem to have natural Occulmency barriers, which is astounding. Have you never read up on mind magic?" Dumbledore asked trying to shift the conversation.

"No, I just knew that Snape, and you were trying to enter my mind." Harry said suspiciously.

"Harry please it is professor Snape, and I do apologize for both of our actions. I will do my best to never let it happen again." Dumbledore said.

"Of course, sir." Harry said with just a hint of sarcasm.

"You believe me, don't you Harry. You don't think I would intentionally try to read your thoughts do you?" Dumbledore asked.

"Of course not sir." Harry lied. Voldemort told me you'd want to control me. Thank Merlin I've got Salazar, the things you could have found out about me.

"Harry, I want to give you this." Dumbledore said as he waved his hand and a book from his shelf flew into it.

Harry's eyes widened at the wandless magic. "Sir, how did you do that you didn't use your wand?" Harry asked.

"Ah well, Harry. All modesty aside, I am a rather powerful wizard, and I am capable of wandless magic." Dumbledore said.

"Then why do you even use your wand at all?" Harry asked.

"Well Harry, a wand makes magic easier and less draining. Also, wandless magic is the mark of a powerful wizard, and many people are very intimidated by those who can perform it." Dumbledore said.

Harry nodded his head and then looked at the book Dumbledore had placed on his desk for him. The cover read, Occulmency: The Magical Defense of the Mind. Harry rose one of his eyebrows up curiously.

"You have natural Occulmency barriers, Harry, but you could always strengthen them. That book should help you, read it and practice over the summer." Dumbledore said.

"I thought you couldn't do magic over the summer?" Harry asked truly curious.

"Ah well that is only for magic that comes from your wand. Internal magic such as Occulmency will not be illegal for you to do. It's one of the little loop holes in the underage magic law." Dumbledore said with a bright smile.

Harry was very torn now. On one hand, this was an incredibly generous gesture by the headmaster. Hell Dumbledore just gave him the ok to practice some magic over the summer, and told him that internal magic is not illegal. Harry wondered if he would be able to do any wandless magic, it would be a way to keep the Dursleys at bay if Salazar was hunting. Another part of Harry though was screaming to not trust Dumbledore. Voldemort had told him that Dumbledore would try to give him little bits of freedom to make him more reliant on the headmaster. Harry decided that he would accept the gift, but he wouldn't be putting any faith in the headmaster as he was still wary of the old wizard's motives.

"Thank you sir." Harry said as he accepted the book.

"Now Harry I want to discuss your arrangements for this summer with you." Dumbledore said.

Harry instinctively narrowed his eyes.

"I want you to remain at the Dursley's this summer. It just isn't safe for you out side of the wards, I've put up for your protection there." Dumbledore said.

"Why isn't it safe and what wards?" Harry asked darkly. He was already starting to formulate a counter argument to Dumbledore. He wanted out of his house this summer. He had standing invitations to go to Malfoy Manor and Tonks' house once they came back from vacation.

"Well Harry you've seen first hand the fact that Voldemort is not dead. What's more disturbing is he seems to have taken interest in you. I don't want you to be outside of your aunt and uncles much this summer. You see when your mother died to protect you, her sacrifice protected you even after her death. As long as you stay with her sister, the blood wards I put around your aunt's house will protect you from Voldemort." Dumbledore said.

Harry was silently fuming. Blood wards! BLOODY BLOOD WARDS! MY MOTHER WASN'T RELATED TO THAT FOUL WOMAN! AND WHY DO I NEED TO BE PROTECTED FROM VOLDEMORT! HE'S PRACTUCALLY A BLOODY GHOST! I NEED PROTECTION FROM MY RELATIVES YOU BASTARD! YOU WERE PROTECTING ME FROM THE WRONG PERSON!

"I see. I don't think that I will be doing that though." Harry said icily.

"Harry this is for your protection. A lot of Voldemort's followers did not go to Azkaban. Many of them would actually try to harm you if they could." Dumbledore said calmly.

"What's wrong with the wards at Malfoy Manor? Draco invited me over there for the summer." Harry said darkly.

Dumbledore looked very pensive. "I-I was unaware that you and Draco had summer plans together."

"I'm sorry, but I didn't see how it was anyone at Hogwarts' business what my summer plans were." Harry said staring Dumbledore right in the eye.

"Well Harry when the student's life is under threat such as the way yours is to Voldemort, the school will step in to insure that you are safe.

Harry felt like punching the headmaster. My life is in danger you bastard, but it's not Voldemort who will be trying to kill me this summer. Where were you and your precious school when the Dursleys were abusing me? Where were you when Voldemort was being beaten up in a muggle orphanage?

"Finally, the last reason I would like for you to spend time at Privet Drive Harry is the most important of all. The blood wards that protect you also protect your aunt, uncle, and cousin. They are muggles who will have no defense against magic should Voldemort or his followers find them." Dumbledore said.

Harry wanted to leave the office. Hell he wanted to leave the bloody school. You are protecting them! You bothered to protect a bunch of pathetic muggles, who abused me for ten years, and you want me to go back there! I'll go back there alright, but I'll bloody kill them! How dare the Dursleys treat me like they did while I was ensuring they live! How dare they abuse me when I was saving their very lives!

Harry's face must have shown something other than blinding rage because Dumbledore smiled and said, "Good. Now that we understand each other..."

Harry was about to say something when Dumbledore's bird let out a thrill.

The noise was something Harry couldn't place, on one hand it was soothing, yet at the same time it made him want to cringe away and hex the creature. Harry just kept his face neutral and turned to look at the bird.

The phoenix for its part just stared right back at Harry. After a few moments, Harry turned back to the headmaster, who was watching him carefully.

"Is that all, sir." Harry said as he stood up to leave regardless of Dumbledore's answer.

Dumbledore just nodded his head and Harry quickly left the office.

When Harry closed the door, Dumbledore turned to his companion. "Fawkes what do you think?" He asked.

The Phoenix gave a thrill of uncertainty that caused Dumbledore to sag into his chair feeling every day his age. On one hand, he was glad that Harry did not react negatively too Fawkes' song; however, he didn't show the enthusiasm that someone firmly entrenched in the light should have felt. The boy's face had remained completely impassive.

"We will have to watch Harry much closer the next few years, Fawkes." Dumbledore said after a while.

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Harry spent the rest of his last night at Hogwarts ranting about Dumbledore to Draco and Tonks. The two of them made very good listeners and sympathized with his desire to punch the headmaster.

The morning came quickly though and soon everyone was packed and on the Express to Kings' Cross. Draco, Tonks, and Harry shared a compartment with Blaise, Susan, and Hannah. After a few necessary jokes about Hufflepuffs and Slytherins, they spent the train ride together laughing and talking about what they were all planning to do over the summer. Hannah quickly realized who Susan would be spending the summer at the beach with when Blaise and Susan said

they were both going to the same isolated beach town in the south. Both Blaise and Susan colored profusely causing everyone else to laugh.

Tonks had left to go spend time with Granger near the end of the trip, much to Draco and Harry's dismay. They were about thirty minutes out of London when a most unwelcome pair entered their compartment.

"Oiy look what we've got here, Fred." George Weasley said with a grin.

"Looks like a group of first years, brother mine." Fred Weasley responded.

"Leave, Weasleys." Harry said darkly as Salazar rose up out of Harry's robes. His familiar was now even more intimidating. At nearly 31 inches in length, the Asp only had to look at some people for them to cringe away, something that Salazar took great pride in.

"Now, now, now, Potter, don't get all flustered. We just wanted to apologize for everything that happened this year, and last year to Tonks." The twins said together.

Harry was somewhat surprised that the twins actually seemed serious.

"Well you've apologized now get out." Draco waved dismissively.

"We weren't apologizing to you, Malfoy. You see our little sister will be coming to Hogwarts next year, Potter, and she happens to be a fan of yours. We don't want you and your group of Slytherins picking on her like you do Granger." George said.

Realizing that the twins weren't really sorry, they were just worried about their sister. Harry said, "Get out, Weasley. If your sister is like you and your idiot brothers then I have no doubt we'll have words."

"Watch it Potter. We didn't prank you this year, but we swear to Merlin if you hurt Gin-Gin in anyway..." Fred said.

"You'll do what? Dye my hair pink for a day. To threaten someone, Weasley, you have to first be able to back it up." Harry said.

"Well then I guess you won't mind this then!" George said as he and his brother through several Dungbombs into the compartment before they quickly left and closed the door.

"Bastards!" Draco yelled as Hannah and Susan ran to the door to try to get out of the smelly compartment.

"It wont open!" Susan yelled.

"Alohomora!" Harry said waving his ward.

Susan pulled the compartment handle but the door wouldn't budge.

"Damn!" Hannah shouted.

The five of them were left in the smelly compartment until Tonks came by and opened the door from the outside some twenty minutes later. They all exited the compartment gasping for air.

"Oh Merlin, you all smell horribly!" Tonks gasped.

The five smelly first years spent the rest of the train ride standing in the hall talking about how they would get the twins back.

The train pulled into the station and Draco, Tonks, and Harry said goodbye to Blaise, Susan, and Hannah. Harry exited the train followed by Draco and Tonks.

"Do you see your parents?" Harry asked.

"No Father said he would be waiting by the barrier." Draco said.

"Mum's over there talking to her friend Mr. Watson." Tonks said as she pointed to the corner of the station.

Harry nodded and then spotted a large group of red heads. Harry spied a small red haired girl among them. Harry smirked as a devious idea popped into his head. "Follow me." Harry said as he headed right towards them.

"Harry why are we going over by the Weasleys?" Draco asked.

"Vengeance, Draco." Harry said.

Draco and Tonks looked at each other in confusion but followed Harry anyway.

"Fred, George! What you guys just planned on leaving without saying goodbye." Harry shouted causing the twins and every other red head to turn to look at him.

The little red headed girl gasped when she spotted him.

"Potter, what do you want?" Ron asked menacingly.

"Only to say goodbye, Ron. After all, it's only polite. Seriously Fred, George, I didn't know you were the type to prank and run." Harry said with a smile.

"Prank." The large red headed woman Harry assumed was Mrs. Weasley said darkly.

"Oh yes ma'am, nothing major or impressive mind you, just a few dungbombs followed by locking us in the compartment. By the way, I am sorry if my companions and I smell a little." Harry said.

The twins looked torn between being angry at Harry calling their prank unimpressive and cringing away at the glare their mother was giving them.

"Go away, Potter." Percy said dismissively.

"Percy manors." Mrs. Weasley chided.

"It's quite alright ma'am, I will not pretend that your sons and myself are good friends because that's just not true." Harry said honestly.

"Is there something we can do for you then?" Mrs. Weasley asked confused.

Harry just smiled. "Actually ma'am yes. You see the twins told me all sorts of wonderful things about your youngest, what was her name again guys Gin-Gin? They mentioned she was a fan of mine, and I just thought I'd introduce myself."

Draco and Tonks both grinned wildly, and were doing their best to stifle their laughter.

"Oh well that's very nice of you young man. Ginny, why don't you say hello?" Mrs. Weasley said.

"NO, GINNY STAY AWAY FROM HIM, HE'S EVIL!" Ron shouted causing most of the station to stare at him.

"RONALD!" Mrs. Weasley shouted in shock.

"It's quite alright ma'am like I said Ronald and I aren't the best of friends." Harry said with a smile as he walked up to Ginny Weasley who was staring at him in awe.

"Hello, Ginny I'm Harry." Harry said extending his hand.

"H-h-hello...M...Mr. Potter." Ginny squeaked out.

Harry smiled, "Oh please it's just Harry. I'm not going to be calling you Ms. Weasley now am I?"

Ginny blushed very red and shook her head.

"Now there's no need to get embarrassed. One of my good friends, Susan Bones, did the same thing the first time I met her." Harry said.

Ginny smiled and her blush receded very slowly.

“Now then Ginny, I just thought I’d stop by and tell you that just because your brothers and I...dislike each other. That doesn’t mean that I will harbor any grudge against you. I don’t know you so I have no reason to dislike you. Maybe you’ll be more like your older brothers Bill and Charlie. I’ve heard some wonderful things about them. Who knows maybe you’ll be a Slytherin like myself?” Harry said with a smile.

Ginny was shocked. This wasn’t the evil mean and cruel person her brothers had written to her about. He was so nice and kind. The thought of being a Slytherin suddenly got more appealing to her.

“My sister won’t be a stupid snake, Potter!” Ron yelled.

At the mention of a stupid snake, Salazar rose up out of Harry’s robes and surveyed the scene. He locked eyes with Ron and hissed, ‘My massster and I do not like you. Sssspeak again and I will bite out your tongue.’

Harry smirked at that as Ron paled. Harry noticed that Percy, Fred, and George were fingering their wands while Mrs. Weasley and Ginny were in shock.

”I-I-I didn’t think that you were allowed s-snakes at Hogwarts.” Mrs. Weasley said in shock.

”Oh Salazar here is my familiar.” Harry said with a grin.

“W-What kind of s-snake is he?” Ginny asked as she hesitantly stepped forward to get a closer look.

”He’s an Egyptian Wizard’s Asp.” Harry said with a smile.

“Merlin they let you keep that at school!” Mrs. Weasley said in shock as her sons looked at her oddly.

”Mum how do you know what that is?” Percy asked curiously.

”Your brother wrote your father and said nine fellow cursebreakers died when some of those got into their tents while excavating a

pyramid. The old wizards of Egypt liked to leave them to protect their tombs because of their long life and deadly venom. Mr. Potter tell me that the snake is at least defanged and had its venom removed!" Mrs. Weasley said staring at Salazar in shock.

Harry smirked, "No ma'am I did not have him defanged and I certainly didn't remove his venom. I doubt we would have bonded so quickly if I did."

"You are telling me that thing is deadly!" Ron shouted.

"Yes, do you really think I'd let my familiar to be defenseless?" Harry asked.

"How do you control it? Bill said that the Pharos couldn't even tame them." Mrs. Weasley said with both fear and awe.

Harry just smirked. He looked right into Ron Weasley's eyes. Harry could tell the boy wanted to scream that he was a parseltongue for the whole station to hear, but couldn't. "Salazar and I have a general understanding."

"I think he's...he's kind of pretty. The way the green runs down his back." Ginny said.

Harry smiled wildly at seeing the shocked looks her brothers were sending her. "Why thank you Ginny. Maybe Slytherin is the house for you. You certainly don't seem like a Gryffindor. I hope to see you next term." Harry said with a smile as he left with Tonks and Draco.

"Harry that was absolutely evil." Tonks said as soon as they were out of earshot.

"You know her brothers will be giving her hell all summer because of that." Draco said.

"I know. But could you imagine how angry all the Weasleys would be if their sister ends up in Slytherin?" Harry said with an evil smirk.

"You're a genius, Harry." Tonks said as they heard a woman shout, "NYMPHADORA!"

Harry and Draco smirked as Tonks grimaced.

"Oh hello Harry, Nymphadora are you ready to go? Harry are your relatives, here?" Mrs. Tonks asked.

"Oh, I think they are on the other side of the barrier." Harry said the smile vanishing from his face.

"I think father said he wanted a word with them." Draco said darkly.

"Oh hello I don't know you. I'm Andromeda Tonks, Nymphadora's mother." Mrs. Tonks said extending her hand.

Realization hit the three students and Draco looked between Tonks and Harry nervously. Tonks just gave the slightest head nod and Draco said, "I'm Draco Malfoy."

Mrs. Tonks looked completely shocked. "M-M-Malfoy?" She asked weakly.

"Yes Ma'am. Harry and I are in Slytherin together." Draco said acting as if he didn't already know she was his aunt.

"A-are you Lucius and Narcissa's son?" Mrs. Tonks asked hesitantly.

"Yes ma'am do you know them?" Draco asked.

"A-are they here?" Mrs. Tonks said avoiding the question.

"Yes, father is over by the barrier waiting for Harry and I." Draco said.

"I-I see. Well Harry if someone is going to make sure you get with your relatives Nymphadora and I will just head out." Mrs. Tonks said quickly.

Harry and Draco noticed the sad look Tonks had after her mother's reaction to Draco.

"O...ok mum. I'll see you this summer, Harry. Bye Draco." Tonks said as she hugged each of them.

"Bye Tonks." They said together as Mrs. Tonks pulled Tonks out of the station as quickly as she could.

"Well that didn't go well." Harry commented.

"Yea no kidding. I'm sorry she just took me by surprise." Draco said.

"Don't worry about it Draco. Now where is your dad?" Harry asked.

Draco and Harry walked closer to the barrier where they spotted Lucius and Narcissa.

"Hello dears." Narcissa said.

"Hello, Mrs. Malfoy." Harry said.

"Hello, mum, father." Draco said.

"Had a good term then?" Lucius asked with a smile.

"Yep." The two Slytherins said together.

"Well I should think so, Quidditch champions and what not." Lucius said with a smile.

Harry and Draco both blushed.

"Now Harry I wanted a word with your relatives before we turn you over to them." Lucius said menacingly.

"You do remember our agreement about them though?" Harry asked.

"Yes, Harry. I assure you I just want to speak with the filthy muggles." Lucius said darkly.

Harry nodded his head and the four of them made their way into the muggle side of Kings Cross. Harry spotted Vernon and Dudley immediately his aunt was almost invisible standing next to them. If it was possible, his cousin had actually gained weight.

"That's them." Harry said pointing them out.

Lucius snorted when he saw the fat muggles. Harry followed Lucius as they walked toward them.

Harry noticed his uncle stiffen when he saw the regal looking Mr. Malfoy walking towards him.

"Dursley." Lucius said darkly.

"Do I know you, sir?" Vernon asked hesitantly.

"No, and you'll wish you never did if you lay a single hand on your nephew." Lucius said darkly.

Harry watched as his uncle sputtered in shock.

"I don't know what my nephew has told you, but he is a little liar!" Vernon said sharply.

What happened next took Harry by surprise; Lucius slammed the head of his cane into his uncle's stomach and then pulled the wolf handle off to expose a dagger.

"This dagger is laced with fermented Dragon puss muggle. When used against a witch or wizard, the individual will suffer from cramps and horrendous pain before St. Mungos administers the antidote. I assure you though that muggles possess no antidote and it will be a very painful death. Think about my dagger in your back next time you think about raising your hand against your nephew. That goes for your fat son as well. I have no love for muggle filth such as yourself, and I would love to introduce my son to the finer points of torture. If Draco and Harry do not correspond this summer, I will arrive and promptly introduce you to what pain really is." Lucius hissed.

Harry repressed a laugh as his Aunt, Uncle, and cousin looked like they wanted to wet themselves and run away.

"Now Harry, should they make you do anything you do not wish, contact me and I will pay them a visit along with some friends." Lucius said seriously.

"Thank you Mr. Malfoy and I will." Harry said.

"I look forward to seeing you at the Manor, Harry. We'll send the invitation as soon as we are back from our holiday." Narcissa said with a smile.

"Thank you Mrs. Malfoy, I'll look forward to it, and I'm sure Salazar will enjoy hunting the grounds again." Harry commented.

"We'll be able to practice some Quidditch too, Flint graduated this year so they'll be an open chaser spot if you want it. We'll have to practice if we want to win the cup for seven straight years." Draco said with a grin.

"Yea, I'll look forward to it." Harry said with a smile.

"Oh, tell Tonks that any invitation applies to the both of you." Narcissa said.

"I'm sure she'll appreciate that ma'am." Harry said as he hugged Mrs. Malfoy.

"Take care of yourself, Harry." Lucius said seriously.

"I will if they act up I always have Salazar." Harry said with a smirk.

Lucius grinned. "Good, I look forward to seeing you this summer."

Harry shook Mr. Malfoy's hand and then followed his uncle out to his car. He put his trunk in the boot and got into the backseat. When Dudley climbed into the car, Salazar rose up out of Harry's shirt causing the fat boy to scream in shock.

"DAAAAD! Harry's got a snake!" Dudley screamed.

"BOY! GET RID OF THAT THING!" Vernon roared.

"No, Salazar will not be going anywhere." Harry said.

"Then I'll be taking him." Vernon said as he extended a meaty hand to take the snake.

Salazar hissed darkly exposing two massive fangs with black venom dripping off them. Vernon immediately withdrew his hand in shock.

"Boy you will get rid of that creature!" He shouted.

"No and if you attempt to take him by force, Salazar's bite is fatal. He's an Egyptian Wizard Asp. A single bite will paralyze you and two or more will kill you within minutes. Even Wizards fear them as the cure has to be administered immediately and multiple bites will make the cure useless. I assure you uncle, Muggles have no cure, and you will die." Harry said strongly.

'Massster may I bite that one!' Salazar hissed darkly.

'You may bite any of them if they attempt to harm you, or to remove you from me.' Harry hissed causing his family to stare at him in shock.

"Yes we can speak to each other. I just told him to bite you if you attempt to harm him or take him from me. He is a very loyal friend so I'd advise you to not tempt him." Harry said. The look of pure terror on his family's faces caused him to smile. Yes, this summer would be different. He would not let his family push him around anymore.

A/N: Well that's it the end of year 1. I hope you all enjoyed it. I know I left the question about Dumbledore knowing about Harry open. I also didn't bring up Harry's usage of the Killing curse. I figured that Dumbledore using Fawkes' thrill as a test for a dark wizard would satisfy the man's curiosity. Now I'm sorry if the first year didn't answer all your questions but come on Harry has six more years to go. Surely you didn't expect me to give away everything at once? I hope everyone is looking forward to year two and to answer everyone's question, YES THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS WILL BE OPENED;

however, just as I did for the Philosopher's Stone, Harry will go about it very differently.

Alright Also remember to review of course. Finally, i'll say that i've been working hard on this story and that I'm almost done with chapter 19. Thanks to everyone who has supported this story.

## Chapter 14

### A Summer Interlude

The Weasley family passed through the barrier at Kings Cross. Mrs. Weasley immediately spotted her husband in a lively conversation with a muggle.

"Molly, Molly come over here!" Arthur Weasley called.

"Arthur, what is it?" Molly asked as her five children followed her.

"Molly this good man claims that he could drive us to Ottery St. Catchpole within an hour." Arthur said excitedly.

"Father surely you jest!" Percy said looking at the car with apprehension.

"Dad, I don't want..." George said.

"To ride in that!" Fred said emphatically.

"It could be fun." Ginny said weakly.

"Ginny are you mad! First speaking to Potter and now this!" Ron hissed.

"What is your problem with, Harry?" Ginny asked sharply as she climbed into the taxi taking a seat behind her father.

"Besides the fact that he's an evil Slytherin, who has threatened to send his snake into Gryffindor Tower to bite me? Nothing." Ron said.

Ginny huffed. "Harry wouldn't ever do that!"

"I'm not sure about that, Ginny. Even the older Slytherins don't mess with Potter and Malfoy. With all the bragging those two do, you'd think that someone would have put them in their place." George said as he took the seat next to Ginny.

"I'd have to agree. You know he takes that snake of his everywhere. I even heard a rumor it's around his chest in class." Fred said as he sat next to his brother.

"I heard that Marcus Flint actually cursed all the bones off the fifth year Slytherin prefect, Michael Jameson, when he yelled at Potter and Malfoy for losing points." Percy said as he reluctantly placed his bag into the muggle taxi and got in.

"Why?" Ginny asked.

"Well, Potter is the best player on the Slytherin Quidditch team. Flint's the Slytherin Quidditch Captain. It's really sickening how much stuff they get away with. I heard Snape even let Potter rewrite an essay he failed after they won a game!" Ron said with a huff as he loaded his trunk into the muggle car.

"Everyone knows that Snape favors the Slytherins, Ronald. I thought that Harry was a very polite young man." Mrs. Weasley said as she climbed into the Taxi next to her giddy husband.

"You actually spoke with Harry Potter, Molly. When?" Arthur asked curiously.

"Well had you joined me to greet your family instead of asking questions about those fellyphones you would have met him also. He came by right before we were all about to leave. Oh Fred, George don't think I forgot about that little prank you pulled either! You two will de-gnome the garden for the first month of summer because of that!" Molly said.

"Prank?" Arthur asked.

"Your sons thought it would be fun to toss a few Dungbombs into Harry's compartment and then locking the door. The poor boy and his friends smelt terrible. Still, Harry was very polite and said that he wanted to talk to Ginny." Molly said.

"Ginny?" Arthur asked becoming more and more confused.

"Yes, it appears that our boys don't get along with Harry very well. The twins took it upon themselves to mention that Ginny would be coming to Hogwarts next year and Harry introduced himself to her." Molly said.

"INTRODUCED HIMSELF! Dad he comes walking over like he owned the entire station, and he tried to turn Ginny into Slytherin! He's a Dark Wizard, Dad!" Ron yelled.

"Ronald you will not go spreading rumors. Is this the sort of thing that you would say at school?" Arthur said with just a hint of a threat.

Ron for his part looked very sheepish.

"OH MERLIN! YOU DO, DON'T YOU! THAT'S WHY HARRY DOESN'T LIKE YOU! YOU CALL HIM A DARK WIZARD BECAUSE HE IS IN SLYTHERIN!" Ginny yelled in shock.

"Ginny he started it! He called me stupid before the sorting!" Ron yelled.

"He cursed George and I and threatened us on the train the first day!" Fred shouted.

"He also flaunts the rules like they are nothing. The number of times I've seen him wandering the halls when he either should be in class or after curfew is obscene!" Percy said like it was the worst thing that Harry could have done.

"So, I take it you give him lots of detentions!" Ginny said sharply to her older brother.

"Pssh, Potter never gets in trouble for anything. McGonagall and Flitwick both give him private lessons. The prefects don't even bother to question him anymore when we see him walking around the school. He always has a note from one of them or says professor Binns excused him. Binns of course is a fool and buys just about every excuse Potter gives him. I heard a rumor once that Potter said that he had a rare form of dragon pox where the pox are invisible to get out a history class!" Percy said with annoyance.

Ginny just laughed at that while her brothers glared at her.

“He gets private lessons? That hardly seems fair. I wonder why Minerva agreed to that, she was always so by the book.” Molly commented.

“Filius as well, Molly.” Arthur commented.

“Pssh, Potter thinks he’s hot stuff because he’s gifted in Transfiguration and Charms. Granger said that Dumbledore didn’t even make him do the practical part of his final!” Ron said.

“The boy is gifted in magical fields.” Arthur said in shock as the cabdriver looked like he desperately wanted to drop the insane family off as quickly as possible.

“What does being gifted mean?” Ginny asked.

“It’s difficult to explain dear, but some people just have such a natural raw talent for some aspect of magic that they barely have to work at it to achieve the results. Harry must be a rather powerful wizard.” Molly said in awe.

“Why do we even care about, Potter! Let’s talk about something interesting!” Ron shouted.

“Who won the Quidditch cup this year boys?” Arthur asked trying to change the subject.

“THOSE BLOODY SLYTHERINS!” Fred shouted.

“DIRTY ROTTEN SLYTHERINS!” George shouted.

“I HATE POTTER!” Ron shouted.

Ginny was now on the verge of hysterical laughter. “So I take it Harry beat you at Quidditch?” Ginny asked trying to hide a smile.

"Bloody idiot jumped off his broom twelve feet in the air to catch the Snitch. We were so close to winning. The final score was 200-190. We should have won the cup! This is all Tonks' fault. If she would have gotten to the Snitch, we would have won!" Fred raged.

"Well I can't say I'm surprised to hear that Harry is good at Quidditch. If I remember correctly, Harry's father was an amazing flier as well." Molly said.

"Yes, though I'm surprised that they let a first year on the Slytherin team." Arthur said.

"Two first years!" Ron raged.

"Two. Who's the other one?" Arthur asked surprised.

"Harry best friend, Draco Malfoy!" Fred said darkly.

"MALFOY! Harry Potter is best friends with a Malfoy!" Arthur said shocked.

"Yea, told you he was dark Dad!" Ron shouted.

"Is this the same Malfoy who Dad doesn't like?" Ginny asked hesitantly.

"Yes, his son is the spitting image of Mr. Malfoy, and he's far more arrogant and vocal than Potter about his beliefs. I'm proud to say I gave him a week's detention for calling me a blood traitor." Percy said.

"If he's such a blood purist why does he hang out with Harry? I mean everyone knows that Harry is a halfblood." Ginny asked.

The four Weasley boys looked at each other for a second and then nodded their heads.

"There is a rumor that started to go around about Harry. Apparently, Harry Potter might in fact be a pureblood. Draco told several Slytherins about a blood purity test that Harry took." Percy said.

Molly and Arthur both looked shocked. "Lily Potter a pureblood? I assure you that is not true." Molly said.

"Granger told me in not so many words that Potter threatened to kill her if she ever called him a halfblood." Ron said darkly as they pulled up to the gate that led to the burrow.

"That's just another lie you probably tell to other students about him." Ginny said in annoyance.

"That will be 78 pounds." The driver said quickly as he pulled up the dirt road near the Weasley's home.

"Obliviate! You will return to Kings Cross and forget everything that happened on the ride here." Arthur said as Molly levitated the trunks out of the car.

The driver nodded his head and began to drive away. Tonks put her trunk in the backseat of her mum's car and got inside. She had hoped that her mum would have taken the news that she and Draco were close a little better. Instead, her mum had just forced her out of the station as quickly as possible.

"So how was term dear?" Andromeda asked.

"It was really good." Tonks said honestly.

"How were your end of year exams?" Andromeda asked again.

"Oh, well I think Draco and Harry both were a little annoyed by how freaked out I was by them, but I think I did well." Tonks said.

Andromeda bit her bottom lip as her daughter brought up Draco Malfoy. "Are you very close to Draco Malfoy, Nymphadora?" Andromeda asked hesitantly.

"Er well yeah, I am. He's Harry's best friend in Slytherin, and the three of us spend a lot of time together. While I was having my fight with Harry over Christmas, Draco was the one who was writing to

me.” Tonks said hoping that putting her cousin in a good light would help her mum see that he was a good person.

”I see. So Harry did end up in Slytherin then.” Andromeda said evenly.

”Um...well...yea. I mean I didn’t think he would end up in Gryffindor. He hated too many people in that house going into school to end up there.” Tonks said.

”When did Harry meet, Malfoy?” Andromeda asked curiously.

”Harry and I both met him during our trip to Diagon Alley last summer.” Tonks said honestly.

”WHAT! WHY DIDN’T YOU TELL ME!” Andromeda screamed in shock as she narrowly avoided hitting another car.

”Mum, I...I...I didn’t think it was a big deal. He was just some nice kid who we had ice cream with.” Tonks said.

”Still Nymphadora, you know you shouldn’t be running around with strange children. They could be dangerous!” Andromeda said sharply.

”What? Mum what are you talking about? Draco is not dangerous, he’s twelve!” Tonks said.

”Believe me, Nymphadora. Draco Malfoy is dangerous, and I don’t think I want you to hang out with him any longer.” Andromeda said quickly.

”WHAT! Mum, I’m not going to stop hanging out with Draco at school. Hell Harry and Draco are my best friends!” Tonks shouted.

”I can assure you, Nymphadora. Draco Malfoy is nobody’s best friend. He is most likely only friends with you because of your talent as a metamorphmagi.” Andromeda said.

Tonks felt a tear start to fall down her face. “How could you say that! Harry and Draco both like me for who I am! I stayed in my base form

most the year and they never asked me to change into something for them!" Tonks raged.

"Dear, I just think that you should be careful. If Harry is becoming close with the Malfoys, then perhaps you might want to start distancing yourself." Andromeda said reluctantly.

".!" Tonks shouted.

"Nymphadora, the Malfoy family supported the one who must not be named. Just because Lucius Malfoy paid off enough people to claim the imperious curse, did not make what he did any less real! The Malfoys have been dark for generations, and I will not let my only daughter become close to a family like that!" Andromeda said darkly.

"I'm sorry you feel that way, Mum, because I'm not going to stop being friends with either Draco or Harry." Tonks said defiantly.

Andromeda felt like slapping her daughter. How could Nymphadora befriend someone like Draco Malfoy? I highly doubt that Draco would have gone out of his way to befriend Nymphadora. The Malfoys always looked down on anyone who wasn't pureblooded. The only way Nymmy and Draco could have become close is if Draco and Harry met each other and then Harry introduced Draco to Nymphadora. Oh, Merlin. If Nymphadora realizes that Draco is her cousin, I'll never get her to abandon that horrible family.

The rest of the ride home was spent in silence. Tonks didn't feel like speaking to her mother, and Andromeda was too scared to let something slip about their family's connection to the Malfoys.  
Outside Number 4 Privet Drive

The Dursleys arrived outside of number four Privet Drive after a thirty minute drive on the freeway. As soon as they parked, the three Dursleys quickly left the car and ran into the house.

'Cowards.' Salazar said mockingly.

Harry grimaced as he lugged his large trunk out of the back of the car. When Harry entered the house, his uncle was standing outside of the

cupboard with a sick grin. Before Harry could ask him what he thought he was doing, his uncle grabbed his trunk and tossed it into the cupboard. He then slammed the door and locked it.

"You will not be doing any freakish things this summer, boy!" Vernon said with an evil sneer as he placed a large padlock on the door.

Harry saw red, the days of being frightened of his uncle had long past. He reached into his pocket and drew out his wand. "Looks like you forgot on thing, Uncle!" Harry said darkly as his uncle's eyes rose.

"You can't do any magic! Lily said it was illegal until you were sixteen. You can't do a thing to us!" Petunia hissed from the kitchen.

"If I did enough magic, someone would come to see what was wrong. What a story I could tell them, aunt Petunia. Most wizards don't respect muggle filth such as yourself. Not to mention that Mr. Malfoy, you remember him don't you uncle? He happens to be good friends with the Minister of Magic, himself." Harry said darkly causing his aunt to pale.

"YOU WILL NOT USE THE M-WORD IN THIS HOUSE!" Vernon shouted.

"Magic." Harry said defiantly.

Harry watched as his uncle took a threatening step closer to him only to stop when Salazar began to rise up out of Harry's clothing.

'Do it. Try to sssstrike my massster, muggle. I will enjoy tearing into your flessssh.' Salazar hissed.

"My friend says he would enjoy tearing into your flesh, uncle. Please by all means continue your threatening advance. You might even get a few blows on me before Salazar kills you. One bite is all it would take." Harry said with a sadistic smile.

For the first time in his life, Harry saw his uncle's face go from purple in rage to white in fear. He was looking at the large black Asp with no small amount of terror.

'I sssmell your fear, muggle. Attack, Attack, I want to rip, I want to tear.' Salazar hissed.

"B-B-boy you will be in Dudley's old r-room this summer. G-Get out of my sight!" Vernon said weakly.

Harry smirked at his uncle and he ascended the stairs and entered the smallest bedroom in the house.

Dudley's second bedroom was cluttered with his old broken toys. The room itself looked like it was just a storage unit for things Dudley no longer cared about. Harry saw two broken TVs, a broken computer monitor, an old game system his cousin never played, hundreds of small broken action figures, and a complete encyclopedia collection, which appeared to never been touched. Harry put Salazar down on the bed and began putting things into the closet. It took Harry nearly four hours, but eventually he was able to walk around without tripping over one of Dudley's old broken possessions.

'Are you hungry, Sssalazar?' Harry asked.

'No massster. I disssscovered where the Witch-Cat hid her mice from me. I ate well on the lassst day at Hogwartsss.' Salazar replied.

Harry shook his head and smiled. Professor McGonagall was probably screaming herself hoarse cursing Salazar right about now.

'Very well. It hasss been a long day, I think I will go to sssleep.' Harry said as he locked the door to the room.

'Goodnight massster.' Salazar replied as Harry climbed into bed with his familiar.

&&&

Harry awoke the next day to the sound of his door being smashed open.

"THERE IT IS!" Harry heard his uncle bellow.

Harry immediately found his glasses and put them on. Standing in his room were two men wearing white jumpers. Each of the men had a large poll with a small loop at the end of it.

“Get out!” Harry said as he jumped to his feet.

“Son, we are with Animal Control. Your uncle tells us you found a poisons snake and brought it home with you. We have to take it.” The older of the men said as he approached Harry’s bed with his poll out.

‘Massster what are thesse white men doing!’ Salazar hissed.

‘Come to me.’ Harry hissed instinctively offering his familiar his arm.

Salazar immediately tore his gaze from the white men and quickly raced up Harry’s outstretched arm. The snake proceeded to race up Harry’s shoulder. Once Salazar had himself secured on Harry’s body, he raised his head, and hissed menacingly at the two men in white.

The two men from animal control stood in shock. They had never seen someone have such command over a snake before.

“You see get rid of that thing now!” Vernon roared from the doorway.

“They won’t be taking Salazar anywhere...not if they know what’s good for them.” Harry said darkly staring right at the Animal Control men.

“Potter you will turn over that blasted Snake right now or else I will...” Vernon shouted.

”A visit from Lucius Malfoy is what you will get uncle! That is unless you tell these two people to leave and never try to pull a stunt like this again!” Harry raged as his uncle paled slightly.

“Malfoy!” The younger looking animal control man said in shock.

Harry looked at the man carefully. “You know of him.”

The young man could only nod his head slightly. "A-are...MERLIN! He just called you Potter! Are you...are you... Harry Potter?" The young man asked in shock.

Harry stared at the young animal control worker. Harry was confident that he did not know the man from anywhere in the muggle world, and he couldn't imagine a wizard working for Animal control. Still the man was aware of both him and Lucius.

"Who are you?" Harry asked menacingly.

"Alexander Smith, but...but Smith is just what I changed my last name to. I-I'm a Squib, Mr. Potter." Mr. Smith said.

"A Squib, I've heard of that before. I believe the caretaker at my school is also one, but I do not know what that means." Harry admitted.

The man named Alexander Smith looked at his partner who was looking at him oddly. Taking a deep breath, he said, "It's the exact opposite of muggleborn."

Harry thought about that for a second. What's the exact opposite of a muggleborn? A muggleborn is a witch or wizard born to muggle parents. So the opposite would be a...a...a muggle born from wizarding parents! "THAT'S POSSIBLE!" Harry shouted in shock.

"I-I'm afraid so, Mr. Potter." Mr. Smith said.

Harry's eyes darkened. "Then you will understand this, Salazar is my familiar. Should you attempt to take him...I will do whatever I need to stop you." Harry threatened.

Alexander Smith was very torn. On one hand, he knew it would be difficult to convince Michael to let a young boy keep a dangerous pet; however, he knew that if he tried to take Harry Potter's familiar...he shivered involuntarily. He couldn't imagine the hate mail he would get, not to mention death threats. He could see the headline of the daily prophet, Squib Brought Before Wizengamot: Tried To Take Harry

Potter's Familiar. Knowing that what he would say next would not go over well, he said, "Michael, we need to leave."

His partner turned to look at him like he was mad. "Alex, that boy's in possession of what looks like an Egyptian Cobra! Those things are deadly. I know it looks like he had control of it, but we can't let him keep it." Michael said in a tone of finality.

"Should you try to take him, I will hurt you, and then my uncle." Harry said menacingly.

"Do you see now the boy is deranged, he needs to be taken away as well!" Vernon roared.

"SHUT UP YOU MUGGLE FILTH!" Harry barked while Salazar hissed darkly causing Vernon and the two Animal Control people to take a step backwards.

"Listen son, if that snake bites you, you are as good as dead." Michael said as he took a slow step forward and extended his poll.

Harry snatched his wand off the table and pointed it at Michael's heart. "Stay where you are." Harry said.

"Michael just stop. We need to leave." Alex said causing Michael to turn on him.

"What is your problem, Smith! We can't leave. We have to do our jobs!" Michael shouted.

"I am not going to die for this!" Alex yelled causing his partner to stop and stare at him.

"We can take the snake, Alex, don't..." Michael said.

"I'm not worried about the bloody snake! That boy is connected to my past, Alex. You were so good to give me this job with no questions asked. I owe you a lot. I don't know what I would have done if you didn't help me. Just trust me when I say you do not want to take that

snake from that boy. If the right people found out what you tried to do, they would kill you or...or send you someplace where you would wish you were dead." Alex said.

"You're one of them!" Vernon hissed in understanding.

"No I'm not, but I know for damn sure that if this got out you would be in a lot of trouble!" Alex yelled as he stepped towards Vernon Dursley. "I mean are you daft man? Do you have no concern for your life?! If...if the right people found out what you tried to do...Michael just trust me on this. Let's. Now!" Alex said sharply as Vernon Dursley's eyes went wide with shock.

Michael had been working with Alex for nearly five years. The man told him flat out when he interviewed that Smith wasn't his last name, and that he had no records. Not even a birth certificate. Michael had been apprehensive about hiring such a person, but he seemed so honest and so scared. He was just a sixteen year old boy at the time, so Michael took him under his wing and showed him the ropes. They had been partners for the last three years and he trusted Alex.

So when he saw the legitimate fear his friend seemed to have of whoever the boy was connected to, he had no choice but to nod his head in acceptance. The fact that his partner tore into the young man's uncle only seemed to prove that this was one case he didn't want to deal with and he left the room.

When the two Animal Control people left, Harry stared into his uncle's eyes. "Try that again, and you die. I will send Salazar into your room while you sleep and he will bite you, aunt Petunia, and Dudley." Harry threatened seriously.

Vernon Dursley wanted to do nothing more than to walk over to the boy and punch him in the face, but his Nephew's snake would not stop staring at him. The snake seemed almost itching to attack him. So Vernon fought his natural impulse and started to leave the room.

Before he could leave though, Harry called out, "You will open that cupboard and retrieve my school things, Vernon. That is unless you want Mr. Malfoy to hear of this incident."

Vernon Dursley stopped in the doorway. The thought of strangling his nephew passed through his head; however, the sound of that damn snake hissing made him go down stairs, open the cupboard, and dragged the trunk full of freakish things up to his Nephew. All he could do is growl slightly at the boy as he left the room.

The Smallest Bedroom, #4 Privet Drive

Two weeks had past since Harry had first arrived at Privet Drive and Harry had not yet heard from any of his friends. Harry was at first disheartened that they would just forget about him, but after some thought, realized that both Draco and Tonks had mentioned going on Vacation abroad. If his two best friends left early, Harry could understand their lack of correspondence.

After the incident with Animal Control, many things changed at Privet Drive. Most of those changes were good for Harry. Harry was no longer required to do any of his previous chores, something that made Dudley very angry. Harry was also given sizable portions for all his meals while Dudley was placed on a rather strict diet. The thing that made Harry the happiest though was that the Dursleys were leaving him alone.

Harry had yet to start any of his summer essays for school. His mind was focused on two interconnected things. First was Voldemort, Harry wasn't sure what to make of the Dark Lord. As much as Harry wanted to say that Voldemort shouldn't have tried to kill him, he could not. The number of times Harry had wished he had died along with his parents while he was being punished in his cupboard made him accept that the Dark Lord's explanation. Voldemort's warnings about the Headmaster were also burned into his mind.

In their meeting at the end of term, the Headmaster's attempt to read his mind bothered Harry greatly. The fact that Harry almost forgot Salazar at the Slytherin table before scared him. He didn't want anyone finding out his secrets. The only people who knew that the Headmaster was Harry's ancestor were The Malfoys, Tonks, and Voldermort. Harry trusted the Malfoys and Tonks with his secret.

When Draco and Tonks found out about the headmasters attempt at reading his mind, they both said that they would be ordering books on Occulmency and practicing over the summer. Harry was of course very grateful to them. Draco assured him that both his parents were proficient in the art of mental defense, and Harry didn't think Voldemort would be sharing anything he found out about Harry with Dumbledore.

Practicing his Occulmency was the second thing Harry was focused on. The book Dumbledore had given him was not something for beginners unfortunately. The book assumed that the wizard or witch already possessed some mental barriers and mainly offered tips to strengthen them. Harry would have been completely lost if Salazar hadn't offered to help him create his first mental shield.

::Flashback::

'Masssster, the firssst ssstep to protecting your mind issss to relax. To create the necessary barrierssss you musst have a clear mind.' Salazar hissed.

'How do I go about clearing my mind though, Salazar? How do you relax?' Harry asked.

'I think about the joy of the hunt. I envisssion myssself in a wide open field, the sssmell of my prey on my tongue. I find that my mind isss most clear when I am in sssuch a place, Masssster.' Salazar hissed.

Harry thought about what his familiar said. Where would I be most comfortable? I suppose in the air would be an option. Yes, when I'm flying I am completely relaxed. The wind rushing all around me as I race around the pitch, the joy of entering a death defying dive, even the pre-game lap relaxes me.

'I know when I am mossst relaxed Sssalazar, now what isss the next ssstep?' Harry asked.

'You musst project your consciousssss sself into the place where you are mossst relaxed.' Salazar hissed.

::End Flashback::

Unfortunately, Harry found Salazar's suggestions very difficult. After nearly a week of trying, Harry finally was able to do as Salazar said. He saw himself flying on his broom around the Quidditch pitch.

With Salazar's help, Harry had managed to form a very basic Occulmency shield. Harry envisioned a stone wall encircling his Quidditch pitch. It took almost every waking hour for Harry to mentally construct it. What made the process so tedious was Salazar making him build his mental wall up stone by stone. Salazar would not let him just imagine a massive wall appearing. Harry had to lay each piece of stone and then build it up slowly around his Quidditch stadium. Salazar said that by building the wall brick by brick, his first line of mental defense would be stronger.

When Harry completed the wall around his Quidditch Pitch, he was ecstatic. It took nearly a week of intense mental labor, but Harry took great pride in his first line of mental defense. So when Salazar told him that Dumbledore and Snape would have no trouble passing by his stadium wall to access his mind, Harry was disheartened.

According to Salazar, the walls Harry was currently building were essentially just a warning system to alert the mind of an invading presence. The more walls Harry could build, the more time he would have to attempt to break the connection with the invading presence. While the walls were tedious to construct, and served a vital purpose they did have a major draw back. They could not repel the attack like Salazar had been doing.

Salazar informed Harry that after he had constructed enough mental walls, he would begin to categorize all his thoughts and memories. This process would take a while as one had to go back and sort every memory into categories. Once the memories were sorted they were stored inside the mental fortifications, and the final step of Occulmency could begin.

The final step of Occulmency was what the book Dumbledore had given him was about. The book detailed different ways to deflect and even harm an attacking mental presence. Harry read some of the

book and it was truly fascinating. A master Occulmens could set mental traps that caused the invader to feel pain, sorry, agony, or any myriad of emotions causing them to lose focus on their attack. They could also create stronger mental defense. The author of the book described hidden pits that would have spikes at the base. If an attacker were to fall into the pit, he would instantly be ejected from his mind. Other interesting defenses included passwords to access certain memories.

Overall, Harry understood that it would be a long time before he was done working on Occulmency.

So Harry sat on his bed at Privet Drive and prepared to enter his mind. He was going to start the construction of his next mental defense today. Salazar was lying on his shoulders guarding him just in case the Dursley's tried anything while he was focused on working his mind magic.

Harry closed his eyes and focused on seeing his Quidditch pitch. Harry saw his first mental wall around the Quidditch pitch. The walls extended high above the stands, but he quickly spotted a problem. Anyone could just go over the walls if they were on a broom. Harry smiled and began to think about enclosing his Quidditch pitch with a dome. Harry was about to begin constructing his next mental barrier when he heard Salazar's voice hissing from all around him.

'Massster the elder rabbit isss here, and he isss unhappy with your uncle.' Salazar said.

Harry sighed; he would have to build up his mental walls at another time. Harry opened his eyes too a rather strange sight. The door to his room was open and Lucius Malfoy was standing over the beaten form of Vernon Dursley.

Lucius Malfoy was worried. Draco had sent off letters to both Harry and his young niece while they were vacationing. Draco became distressed when he did not get a quick reply, but Lucius assured him that international Owl mail takes a long time. After six days in France, Draco sent off another letter.

At the end of their second week of vacation, Draco received a curt reply from his cousin. Young Nymphadora said that her mother was not happy with her being friends with him and that their mail was being screened. She also said that Harry had yet to respond to her letters, and that she was starting to panic.

When Draco received his cousin's letter, he demanded that they return to the manor and check on Harry. Lucius agreed that it was unusual for Harry to not respond to his two letters, and used his connections at the English and French Ministries to obtain an international portkey.

They arrived at the English Ministry of Magic's International Portkey landing zone. They had been on English soil less than three seconds before Draco said, "Father go check on Harry! Trixi!"

An elf arrived with a small pop.

"Yes master, Draco, sir." Trixi said.

"Take these bags back to the manor." Draco drawled.

"We will see you at home, Lucius." Narcissa said.

"Very well." Lucius said as he apparated to Privet Drive.

The first thing that Lucius noticed when he arrived outside of Harry Potter's address was a rather fat child doing the garden under his mother's watchful eye.

"Muuuum make Harry do this." The fat boy drawled.

"No Diddikins, you know we can't do that." The woman said shrilly.

Lucius grinned. Well it appeared that his threat did have some merit after all. He cast a disillusionment charm on himself and he walked into the house. Once he got inside he looked around for Harry. He spied the cupboard under the stairs. Silently praying that Harry wasn't locked inside he waved his wand over it and it popped open.

Lucius let out a breath of relief when he saw that Harry wasn't inside; however, his relief turned to anger as he looked at the place Harry Potter grew up. The small room consisted of spider webs and a single moldy cot in the corner. Lucius slammed the small door closed and dropped his disillusionment charm. He heard Harry's fat uncle speaking in the kitchen. By the sound of it; he was speaking with another Muggle.

Lucius walked to the kitchen and grinned. He placed his wand inside his robes pushed the door open. He saw the fat muggle sitting with his back to him talking into a small black device. His father had told him about muggle telephones before, but he had never seen one up close. Lucius decided to get the fat muggle's attention. He drew his dagger out of his cane, and coughed loudly causing Harry's fat uncle to turn around and stare at him with wide eyes.

"Where is your nephew?" Lucius asked fingering his dagger.

"U-U-Upstairs, f-f-first...bedroom on the r-r-right." Vernon stuttered.

Lucius eyed the muggle for a moment before replacing his dagger into his cane and leaving the kitchen. He proceeded to go upstairs and knock on the door the fat muggle had said was Harry's room. When he got no response, Lucius got angry. "Accio fat muggle" Lucius said.

A moment later, Vernon Dursley was screaming as he flew up the stairway. Lucius placed a deflection charm on himself, and when Vernon Dursley reached him. The spell ricocheted the fat muggle right into Harry's door, which broke open under the force of a 300 pound man slamming into it.

Lucius walked into the room to see Harry sitting on the bed with his legs crossed. Salazar was positioned on his shoulders and began to hiss. Lucius aimed his wand at Harry's relative in case the muggle decided to get any ideas.

"Lucius what are you doing here?" Harry asked curiously.

Lucius stepped away from the muggle and looked at Harry. He looked alright physically. The muggles obviously had been feeding him. "Draco was concerned when you didn't respond to his two letters. Ms. Tonks wrote that you hadn't responded to her letters either, and that she was beginning to get nervous." Lucius said.

"Letters? I never got any letters." Harry said.

"None?" Lucius said in shock.

"No, I just assumed both Draco and Tonks were on vacation and couldn't write." Harry said .

"We were on vacation, but Draco still sent out two letters. Since neither you nor Tonks responded to Draco's first letter, we assumed that the letter was lost over the long trip; however, that was not the case. Tonks was unable to respond because of her mother apparently." Lucius said.

"Why would I have not gotten any letters though?" Harry asked.

Lucius thought on that for a while. "Dobby." Lucius said.

A small popping sound accompanied the arrival of the stupidest looking house elf Harry had ever seen.

"Dobby do you know why Harry did not receive any letters from Draco?" Lucius demanded.

"Y-Yes, Sir. Dobby took all the letters that were going to Mr. Potter." Dobby said.

Harry was shocked, "Why the hell would you do that?" Harry shouted.

"Master Lucius said to make sure Harry Potter was safe. Dobby thought that the letters could have been jinxed or perhaps..." Dobby started.

"Stupid house-elf!" Lucius said as he delivered a sharp kick to the creature's midsection. "You were to insure that Harry was protected

from his relatives not from my son's mail! Return all the letters you took immediately!"

Dobby snapped his fingers and a small crate appeared on Harry's bed. Harry groaned there were at least ten letters inside of the crate. "Great I need to write some responses to explain this." Harry said in annoyance.

"I am sorry about this Harry. I took far too much faith in the mental capabilities of a lowly house elf. I should have known he would have done something stupid like this." Lucius said apologetically.

"It is no problem Mr. Malfoy. I just wish I had an owl, this is going to take forever to send off all these letters." Harry said.

Mr. Malfoy thought on that for a moment. "Well Harry, you could borrow Dobby and use him to deliver your mail since you don't have your own owl and this was his mistake. I use house elves to deliver mail when I need it to arrive quicker then owl post will allow." Lucius said.

Harry eyed the pathetic looking house elf. "Are you sure that he won't eat the letter I give him by mistake?" Harry asked sarcastically.

"Not if he knows what's good for him." Lucius threaten darkly.

"Alright if he can deliver mail, he can stay." Harry said.

"Very well Harry. Hopefully future owls won't be intercepted. Expect an invite to the manor soon." Lucius said with a smile.

"Thank you sir, I look forward to it." Harry said.

Lucius nodded before apparating out of the house.

Harry turned to look at his uncle who was now cowering in the corner of his room. "Get out of my room, Dursley." Harry said.

Vernon Dursley got up and went purple with rage. "Now see here! YOU WILL NOT have your freakish friends just showing up! I was on a conference call when that man attacked me!"

"And I should care? I told you to get out!" Harry declared.

Vernon took a step forward, but suddenly could no longer move.

Harry was at first taken aback he didn't do any magic, but then he heard the squeaky voice of the house elf.

"You shall not hurt Harry Potter."

Harry turned to see the little house elf pointing one of its fingers at his uncle. The elf snapped his fingers and Harry watched as his uncle was thrown from the room.

"Impressive magic." Harry commented.

"Thank you, Harry Potter, sir." Dobby said.

"Could you teach me how to do that kind of magic?" Harry asked curiously.

Dobby's eyes widened. "Harry Potter would like to learn house elf magic!" Dobby exclaimed.

"I would. I'm interested in all kinds of magic. Is elf magic considered internal magic? Would it be undetected by the ministry?" Harry asked again.

"Elvin magic is internal magic, Harry Potter sir." Dobby said nodding his head.

"Excellent. Do you think you could teach me?" Harry asked.

Dobby looked hesitant. "Harry Potter, sir. Human's can not learn house elf magic. Wizard and Witches can do wandless magic, sir, but only the most powerful can do it. They is called sorcerers."

"Why were you so excited about me wanting to learn house elf magic than." Harry asked annoyed at being led on by the little creature.

"Harry Potter is powerful wizard sir. For you to even consider learning the magic of the house elves, it is a most high complement." Dobby said.

Harry was slightly annoyed at the creature. Clearly Harry would have to work to get a straight answer out of the little elf. "Fine, wait here and be quite while I read over all the mail you kept from me for the last two weeks."

Harry began taking out his mail. He opened the most recent letter it was from Blaise and Susan.

Harry,

The beach is amazing. Susan and I are having a blast. Susan's aunt is really intimidating and I don't believe for a second she was ever in Hufflepuff. My parents were both shocked to learn that I was friends with you and Draco, but they seemed to be happy about it. They wanted me to invite Draco, Tonks, and you down to the beach for the last week of summer. Susan said Hannah would probably be coming as well as that git Macmillan.

The place we are staying is actually a modified muggle condo. It's got all these weird things in it that everyone has been trying to figure out. Do either you or Tonks know what a Sony is? It's written on the bottom of this big black box in the living room. Dad thought it was some sort of alarm devise, but we can't seem to figure it out.

Hope to hear back from you soon.

Blaise & Susan.

Harry put down the letter and smirked. He took out a piece of paper and wrote a quick explanation about what a Television was and how it worked. He also said that he'd love to join them the last week of summer, even if Draco and Tonks couldn't make it.

Harry put his letter to the side and opened the next one.

Dear Harry,

My brothers told me that writing to you would probably be a waste of time, but I thought I would try anyway. I just wanted you to know that I'm not going to be listening to all the bad things Ron, Percy, and the Twins have to say about you. You seemed really nice at the station, and I hope you will write me back.

Ginny

Harry's smile was huge. He couldn't believe this; he had to show this letter to Draco. He quickly took out a piece of parchment and wrote a response.

Dear Ginny,

I'm glad you won't be listening to Ron. He doesn't like me and I don't like him. Make your own opinions about things Ginny. You don't just have to let your family dictate what you believe. You can of course write to me. I don't have an owl so I don't know how often I'll be able to respond, but I'll read everything you have to say.

Harry

Harry smirked at his response. The chance of infuriating Weasley through his sister was going to be just too much fun.

Harry put the letter to the side and opened the next one.

Dear Harry,

How are you? Why haven't you answered any of my previous letters? What's going on? Have you heard from Draco? If you don't answer this letter, I'm going to come over to your house and blast the door down to make sure you are ok!

Tonks

Harry quickly took out a piece of parchment.

Tonks,

As strange as this will sound an insanely stupid house elf was keeping my mail from me. Yes I'm fine. Draco sent me two letters, but I haven't had a chance to read them yet. I also got a letter from Blaise inviting you, Draco, and I too join him and Susan at the beach at the end of summer. Do you want to go? I thought you were on vacation right now? If you are in Surry, do you want to hang out tomorrow? I'll come by your house.

Harry.

"Dobby." Harry called.

"Yes, Harry Potter, sir?" Dobby said quickly.

"Take this note to Nymphadora Tonks and wait for a response." Harry said handing the letter to Dobby.

"Yes, sir. Harry Potter, sir." Dobby said as he disappeared with a crack.

Harry sighed and started to open his other letters.

Tonks Residence, Surry.

Tonks was not having a good summer. She couldn't help but get into rows with her mum about Draco. The situation had gotten so bad that they had barely spoken in the last week. To add to that, Tonks was constantly worried about why Harry had yet to respond to one of her letters. Tonks was terrified that Harry's muggle relatives had somehow managed to hurt him again. Tonks voiced her opinion to her mother, but her mother simply shot down the very idea as impossible, further infuriating Tonks.

Tonks was currently pacing in her room, cursing herself for the hundredth time for not remembering where Harry lived. The only time she had ever visited Harry's house was when she and her mother

had brought Harry back to those muggles. They apparated there and back before Tonks could recall the address. Harry had attempted to give her the address when they were at the leaving feast, but Tonks just shrugged it off and said that an owl will be able to find him. Merlin was she regretting that now.

A loud pop in the room brought her out of her brooding. Tonks turned around quickly and stared at one of the strangest looking creatures she had ever seen. The little thing was wearing only a pillow case around itself and its long drooping ears made it look quite pathetic.

"What are you?" Tonks asked in shock.

"I is a house elf ma'am. I am currently helping Mister Harry Potter. He asked that I give you this note ma'am."

Tonks quickly ran over to the little creature and snatched the note out of the little house elf's hand. She read it over a few times and then laughed.

"So were you the house elf taking Harry's mail?" Tonks asked.

"Yes ma'am, Dobby is sorry. I thought that it would help protect, Mr. Harry Potter." Dobby said speaking Harry's name with reverence.

"Right, you'll have to explain to me how keeping his mail from him would help him one of these days." Tonks replied in annoyance as she took out a piece of parchment and began to write a note on it. When she was done, she handed it to the elf.

"Alright take this to Harry." Tonks said

The elf bowed and then disappeared with a crack.

Tonks let a smile cross her face as she took a seat on her bed. Harry would be coming over tomorrow. He'd probably have some idea what to do about her mum's problem with Draco.

A/N: Review, Review, Review! Now I know this chapter wasn't particularly exciting or detailed, but it sets the stage for future chapters. Summer will take up 4 chapters including this one. Also,

this is the shortest summer chapter so I hope you all get ready for some long chapters.

## CHAPTER 15

### Summer Days Part 1

Harry got up at five thirty the next morning and left Privet Drive for Tonks' house. The reason for leaving so early was simple, Dudley's gang. While Harry no longer feared his cousin's group of friends, he didn't want to have to deal with the consequences of Salazar killing one of them. So to make sure he avoided them completely, he left his house when he knew none of them would be awake.

It took Harry about thirty minutes to walk across the park to Tonks' house, but his timing couldn't have been better. Harry was a few houses down when he saw Mrs. Tonks exit the house and get her mail from the mail box.

"Mrs. Tonks!" Harry called out.

Harry watched as Mrs. Tonks looked over at his direction. For a second, Harry was sure that she was angry with him. Her eyes narrowed and her lips pursed; however, the look disappeared a second later, and Mrs. Tonks smiled at him.

"Hello Harry, what are you doing here?" Mrs. Tonks asked kindly.

Harry pushed aside the angry look Mrs. Tonks gave him at first. She probably didn't recognize me. It is six in the morning after all. "I'm well ma'am. How have you been?" Harry asked sincerely.

"Oh well I've actually been rather busy working at the ministry. I'm working overtime the next few weeks so that Nymphadora and I can have an extra week in France during July." Mrs. Tonks said.

"Yea, Tonks mentioned that you two would be going to Paris this summer." Harry said.

"Yes, we'll be spending one week in Paris and one week in Nice. I must admit I'm looking forward to it." Mrs. Tonks said.

"Well it sure sounds like fun." Harry said honestly.

"Yes I dare say it will be. Now what are you doing here at this hour, Harry? I spoke to Dumbledore at the start of the summer and he said that you weren't to leave your relatives house." Mrs. Tonks said.

Harry's eyes narrowed dangerously. That bastard who the hell does he think he is. "I don't believe that what I do over the summer is any concern of professor Dumbledore." Harry said darkly.

"Harry, professor Dumbledore just wants to make sure you are safe. He seems to think there is a very real threat to your life." Mrs. Tonks said.

Is she kidding me? She saw what my uncle was like last summer. Why is she blindly listening to Dumbledore when she knows what my life is like in that house? "Be that as it may ma'am, I don't believe Dumbledore has any power to tell me what I can and can not do outside of school. Now as to what I'm doing here, I got a letter from Tonks asking me to visit. So here I am." Harry said.

"Harry, I don't think that is such a good idea. If professor Dumbledore thinks your life might be in danger, then you really should do what he says." Mrs. Tonks said with a much harsher tone than Harry was used to hearing from her.

Harry was doing his best not to get angry at Mrs. Tonks. He really liked her. She was the person who rescued him from his uncle, she healed his wounds, and her daughter is his best friend. "I'm sorry ma'am, but I believe the professor has exaggerated the threat against me to you." Harry said.

"Well I'm running late to work, Harry. I suppose it will be fine for you to visit with Nymphadora today. If you'd like to stay for dinner you are welcome to it, we can discuss this further then." Mrs. Tonks said with a rather icy tone.

"Very well ma'am thank you for the invitation." Harry said politely.

Mrs. Tonks motioned for him to follow her, and the two of them went inside.

"Nymphadora is still asleep, Harry. There is some cereal in the kitchen if you are hungry and want breakfast. Now I really must be off." Mrs. Tonks said as she took some floo powder and tossed it into the fire. "Ministry of Magic." She shouted before disappearing.

Harry sat down in the kitchen and set Salazar down on the table.

'Ssssalazar, why do you think Dumbledore ssspoke to Mrsss. Tonksss about me ssstaying at my relativesss?' Harry hissed.

'I do not know. He could be trying to ensssure that ssshe doesss not take you in again like ssshe did last sssummer.' Salazar said.

'Perhapsss, did you get the impresssion that ssshe was not happy to sssee me?' Harry asked.

'Why would ssshe be, Massster. If sssomeone isss trying to kill you, you are a threat to her daughter.' Salazar hissed.

'You think that ssshe doesss not want me to be near Tonksss? Do you think that isss why they are ssspending an extra week in France?' Harry asked.

'It isss a posssssibility, Massster. Ssshe would not want her daughter to be harmed for being close to you.' Salazar hissed.

'I sssupposse that makesss ssense. What do you think I ssshould do?' Harry asked.

'You do not believe the threat is credible, yesss?' Salazar hissed.

'Correct, Voldemort doesss not wish me dead, and I do not believe the remaining death eatersss wisssh me harm. Luciusss even ssent an elf to protect me.' Harry hissed.

'Then do not lisssten to the old wizard. He knowsss not what the true sssituation isss, then again, perhapsss he doesss know. You ssaid the dark lord mentioned Dumbledore would try to control you. By forcing you to ssstay at your relativesss, he controlsss your movementsss.' Salazar hissed darkly.

'You think Dumbledore might have created a falsse threat to control me?' Harry asked in shock.

'I do not know; however, it iss a possssibility. Either way it doesss not matter, you will not be staying with the pigsss much longer, massster. The rabbitsss will eventually come for you, and you will leave them.' Salazar hissed.

'True." Harry said.

'Masster, I musst go hunt, perhapsss you ssshould build up your mental defenssess while you wait for your friend to arissse.' Salazar hissed.

'Very well. Good luck with your hunting.' Harry hissed as he lowered Salazar off the table and opened the back door for him to go into the yard.

Harry returned to the kitchen, ate a quick breakfast, and then began working on building his next occulmency wall.

&&&

Tonks woke up at eleven. She wasn't sure when Harry would be arriving, so she quickly jumped into the shower and put on some clothes. She walked into the kitchen and let out a gasp. Harry was sitting on the floor with his legs crossed. He seemed completely oblivious to her presence. His face was scrunched up, and sweat was falling from his brow like he was running a marathon. Tonks wasn't exactly sure what to make of the situation so she hesitantly put a hand on his shoulder and said, "Harry are you ok?"

Harry's eyes opened quickly and he frantically started to look around the room. His eyes eventually landed on Tonks and he smiled brightly. "Hey Tonks!" He said with a smile.

"Harry was that meditation you were doing?" Tonks asked curiously.

"What? No that was Occulmency. Haven't you been working on it?" Harry asked.

"No, the book I ordered hasn't arrived yet. What's it like? Is it difficult? You are sweating terribly." Tonks said.

"Yea, it's hard work building up the mental walls. I just started my second barrier this morning. The first one was a lot simpler and it still took me a week of doing nothing else to get it done." Harry said.

"Wow, it takes that long?" Tonks asked in shock.

"According to Salazar, it's probably going to take me two or three years before I can call myself a master Occulmens. The bloody snake wants me to build some thirty walls before I even start the next step. I mean I can't even imagine thirty walls around a Quidditch Pitch." Harry said exasperated.

"Quidditch Pitch?" Tonks asked.

"Oh yea before you even start to build your first mental wall you need to clear your mind and find a place where you feel comfortable. Since I love flying so much, my mental walls are surrounding a Quidditch Pitch." Harry said.

"Er...wow...I didn't think it would be that difficult." Tonks said.

"Yea, it is. I don't know when I'm going to find the time to do it at Hogwarts with all my other lessons, so I'm dedicating as much time as I can over the summer to practicing it." Harry said.

"That's smart." Tonks said in approval.

"Yep, so what's up with you, Tonks? How have you been? I'm sorry about the stupid elf taking all my mail or else I would have come by sooner." Harry said.

Tonks laughed, "Yea only you would have a house elf stealing your mail, Harry."

"Yea, I know, right. So how have things been? Oh, how did your mum respond to you being friends with Draco. She took you out of the station pretty quick when she met him." Harry said.

"Er...well that's one of the things I wanted to talk to you about, Harry. My mum doesn't want me to hang out with Draco." Tonks admitted.

"She actually told you that." Harry said in shock.

"Yep, she even went so far as to say he was only using me for my metamorphmagus talent." Tonks said sadly.

"I can't believe she would say something like that." Harry said shaking his head.

"I know, but she did. I was wondering if you had any ideas about what I could do. Maybe you could talk to her and tell her Draco isn't such a bad guy, she'll listen to you." Tonks said.

"I...er...well Tonks I don't think your mum is all too interested in my opinion. Salazar thinks that she wants me to stay away from you." Harry admitted.

"What are you talking about. Why? " Tonks demanded.

"Er well it appears that Dumbledore told your mum that Voldemort or the death eaters might try to attack me over the summer." Harry said.

"Harry, You Know Who is dead." Tonks said before a horrible thought struck her. "Harry...when you first woke up from the hospital wing, you were delirious. You said something about you and You Know Who talking, and that he really wasn't so bad. You...you were just delirious right?" Tonks asked hesitantly

Harry hesitated for a second and that was all Tonks needed. She gasped in shock. "He's alive! You Know Who is back! What the hell happened why didn't you tell anyone! Oh Merlin, I don't believe this...wait is he the one who put you in the hospital wing! I thought you got hurt fighting Quirrell. That's what Dumbledore announced to the school!"

"Tonks calm down. Let me explain." Harry said.

"Ok, explain, Harry!" Tonks said sharply.

Harry took a deep breathe and told her how Voldemort was possessing Quirrell. How he was trying to steal the Philosopher's stone to regain his body and how they talked briefly. Harry told her about how the killing curse gave him some of Voldemort's powers like parseltongue and named him magical heir of Slytherin. Harry didn't tell Tonks everything. He didn't feel like explaining how he and Voldemort had grown up in abusive environments, and how the dark lord had warned him about Dumbledore. Harry also kept most of his opinions about the dark lord to himself. He did tell Tonks about how it was Dumbledore who sent him to the hospital wing though when his disarming spell caused him to smash into the mirror of Erised.

Tonks just sat and listened to everything Harry had told her. She was completely speechless by the time he finished. After taking a good ten minutes to comprehend all the information Harry had given her, Tonks spoke up. "So what your saying is You Know Who is somewhere between life and death, but he's not a threat to anybody right now." Tonks said still in shock.

"Yes." Harry said.

"But if You Know Who isn't a threat and Dumbledore knows that, why does he think that you are in danger?" Tonks asked.

"I really don't know. Salazar has a theory, but I'm not sure if it's right." Harry said. He figured Salazar might cause less of a reaction then telling Tonks it was really Voldemort who told him about Dumbledore's desire to control him.

"What's his theory?" Tonks asked.

"Salazar thinks that Dumbledore is trying to control me. Make me more reliant upon him. I mean what right does Dumbledore have to tell me what I do and where I go over summer?" Harry asked rhetorically.

Tonks looked hesitant. "I guess it could be true, but Dumbledore is supposed to be the most trusted light wizard in the world. I'm just not sure I believe he would do something so blatantly cruel like that." Tonks said.

"Yea, I noticed everyone just sort of accepts whatever he says and doesn't question it." Harry remarked darkly.

"What do you mean?" Tonks asked.

"I mean your mum knows exactly what my life is like with the Dursleys, but she wanted me to go back there this morning. I guess she could have been worried that whatever threat was after me might go after you as well, but still...I mean if Dumbledore told you that I had to stay at the Dursleys all summer what would you say?" Harry asked.

"I'd tell him he was insane and that you shouldn't have to spend a minute with those bastards." Tonks said darkly.

Harry smiled, "Well at least you understand where I'm coming from."

"Wait so Dumbledore actually told my mum, you know who is alive? I can't believe that she would be so calm. I think she would start stockpiling healing potions or something." Tonks said.

Harry thought about that. "You know I bet he didn't tell her he was alive. I bet he just told her that there was a threat to my life. When I mentioned Voldemort up in the hospital wing, McGonagall said I was cursed and was having trouble recalling the events correctly. I bet Dumbledore doesn't want it to get out about Voldemort."

"That makes sense. Why cause a panic when there isn't anything to worry about. I mean if You Know Who is less than a Ghost, he isn't really a big threat." Tonks said.

"Yea, I guess we should probably keep this between us then." Harry said.

Tonks nodded, "Yea, I don't think people would want to be told You Know Who is actually still alive somehow."

Harry and Tonks spent the rest of the day talking about less stressful things, watching some TV, and doing some of their summer essays. Mrs. Tonks came home from the Ministry at seven thirty and the three of them sat down to an uneasy dinner.

"Well what did you two do all day?" Mrs. Tonks asked.

Harry waited for Tonks to say something, but when it became apparent that she was ignoring her mother he said, "Nothing much. We watched some Television and worked on our Potions essays."

"Are you two nervous about your grades? I understand that they are being mailed out sometime in July this year." Mrs. Tonks said.

"Not really, ma'am. I know what classes I did really well in and which class I probably failed." Harry said with a smile.

"How about you Nymphadora? Hopefully you didn't fail any classes." Mrs. Tonks said.

Tonks again just ignored her mother's question, so Mrs. Tonks turned her attention to Harry.

"So Harry what are you going to be doing the rest of the summer? Are your relatives treating you better?" Mrs. Tonks asked darkly.

"Well we had a misunderstanding on the second day of summer, but we've reached an agreement." Harry said darkly.

"Oh, what kind of agreement?" Mrs. Tonks asked.

"If they hit me, Salazar will bite them in their sleep." Harry said viciously.

Andromeda shuddered involuntarily at Harry's suddenly dark and angry tone. She also didn't for a second doubt that he was serious. Andromeda always found Harry's familiar unsettling. She also

suspected that it was in fact poisonous after she saw it bite a large rat in her garden last summer. The rat got away from the Salazar after the first bite, but it only made it another two steps before it stopped moving and collapsed. Andromeda wasn't sure how poisonous Harry's familiar was to humans or even what kind of snake it was, but she had a feeling she didn't want to know.

"I-I-I see, well I'm glad they are leaving you alone. So no plans then?" Andromeda asked again.

"Oh, well I'm expecting an invitation to stay with Draco for a while, and Blaise Zabini and Susan Bones also invited me to spend the last week of summer with them down at the shore. So I'm looking forward to that." Harry said honestly.

Andromeda's face darkened with the mention of the young Malfoy, but her distrust quickly turned to surprise when Harry mentioned Susan Bones. "Amelia's niece? You're friends with her?" Andromeda asked.

"Yes, Tonks and I are friends with her." Harry said.

Andromeda's head was spinning as she tried to process how Harry could be friends with both Lucius Malfoy's son and Amelia Bones' niece.

"Do you know Madam Bones from the Ministry?" Harry asked.

"Indeed I do. I'm the head spell crafter for the ministry and Madam Bones is the head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement. We have tea every Tuesday and discuss the kinds of spells she wants to be developed for the Aurors and hit wizards." Mrs. Tonks said.

"Oh, well Tonks is also invited to the beach as well." Harry said.

"Really? I would have thought Amelia would have said something?" Mrs. Tonks said.

"Oh well the invitation came from Blaise, but they are staying with the Bones so Madam Bones might not have known Blaise and Susan invited Tonks and I." Harry said.

"Mum do you think I will be able to go?" Tonks said speaking to her mother for the first time.

Andromeda was pensive. "Perhaps, Nymphadora, I'll speak to Amelia about it next Tuesday when I see her." I doubt that Amelia would have gone to stay with the Zabbini's if they weren't trustworthy. They were neutral during the war, but the Zabbini family has never really been one to choose a side during a conflict. I suppose it couldn't hurt to have Nym and Blaise be friends, and Amelia has told me all kinds of wonderful things about Susan. I also doubt that Amelia would be very receptive of Lucius' son so perhaps it will be ok.

"It's going to be fun, Mrs. Tonks. Susan is inviting her friends Ernie Macmillan and Hannah Abbot as well so it should be a good time." Harry said.

Andromeda's eyes widened slightly. I haven't seen Michele Abbot in some time, and I'm sure her daughter is a very nice young lady. While I never really liked Arnold Macmillan, the family is very much against dark magic. "I suppose that that would be a fun group. Michele Abbot and I were dorm mates in Ravenclaw back in the day." Mrs. Tonks said.

"So I can go?" Tonks asked again hopefully.

"Yes, remember to thank Blaise and Susan for inviting you though." Mrs. Tonks said.

"I won't, mum, thanks!" Tonks said happily.

"Are you close with Susan, Hannah, and Ernie?" Mrs. Tonks asked curiously.

"Um well Harry and I are friends with Susan and Hannah. Ernie kind of annoys me, and he doesn't like Harry because McGonagall had

Harry grade some Transfiguration tests and Harry failed him.” Tonks said with a grin.

Andromeda laughed, “Oh if Ernie is anything like his father, I’m sure he just took that very well.”

The rest of the meal had a considerably more relaxed atmosphere. Tonks was finally speaking with her mother again and Mrs. Tonks didn’t get as tense when either Harry or Tonks brought up Draco in passing.

Harry was ready to go back to Privet Drive later that night, but Mrs. Tonks said that it would be fine if he wanted to spend the night, which Harry accepted.

Tonks spent the rest of the night gleefully showing Harry all the outfits she wanted to buy for their trip to the beach. At three in the morning, Harry officially regretted buying Tonks a doll that could model clothing. He fell asleep in her room, but Tonks didn’t even notice as she continued to flip through magazines.

&&&

Harry and Tonks spent the next four weeks together; however, Mrs. Tonks was very resistant to Harry coming over everyday. Tonks always told him about the stupid arguments she and her mum had the night before about him. Harry felt bad, but Tonks refused to let him blame himself. Tonks finished telling Harry about a particularly bad argument, which her mother threatened to set the wards to ban Harry’s magical signature, when she took out a house key and gave it to Harry. Harry was at first shocked, but then thanked Tonks profusely. Tonks just laughed and told him that he spent more time at her house then at his anyway so he might as well be able to come and go.

As angry as Harry was with Mrs. Tonks, he figured that she was one of those people who put a lot of faith in the headmaster. Harry suspicions were pretty much proved correct when he received a letter from the headmaster during the first week of July. Harry and Tonks were at first shocked and awed by the magnificent looking phoenix

that seemingly appeared out of nowhere. However, once Harry opened the headmaster's letter, both he and Tonks scowled. Apparently, when Mrs. Tonks realized that she could not keep Harry and Tonks apart while she was at work, she had written to the headmaster for help. After Harry read the first three lines of the letter, he handed it to Tonks, who got just as far before tossing it into the fire. The Headmaster's note simply chastised Harry for his "blatant disregard for a credible threat," and "selfishly endangering Ms. Tonks' life." Tonks and Harry just called the Headmaster a few choice names before giving Fawkes a note to the Headmaster that politely told him to bugger off.

Apart from outside interferences, Harry and Tonks had a lot of fun together. Much to Harry's shock, Dobby was actually a lot of help once Tonks gave him orders to not gush about how great Harry was. Dobby acted as their personal Chef, Maid, and Owl. Tonks' Owl, Smarty, was rather annoyed at being replaced by an elf for a summer, but Dobby allowed for them to communicate quicker with Draco, Blaise, Susan, and Ginny. Harry was so impressed by the elf, he decided he would speak to Lucius about getting one of his own.

Writing Ginny Weasley was one of Harry and Tonks' favorite things to do. Ginny seemed to be rather smitten with Harry, something that Tonks constantly teased him about. One of the benefits to the young Weasley's crush though was that it gave Harry and Tonks a way to annoy the hell out of the other Weasleys. Together Harry and Tonks had written Ginny several letters all of which 'encouraged' her to think for herself and not just accept what her family and brothers told her to be true. Draco had also helped by suggesting some things to write to the impressionable Weasley. After the young Weasley's latest letter, which she described how she had gotten into yet another fight with her family about Harry; Harry bet Tonks and Draco ten Gallions that the young Weasley would be sorted into Slytherin.

Harry and Tonks didn't just goof off with their time though. The book Tonks bought on Occulmency had finally arrived. Tonks seemed to find it a lot harder to find a place where she could begin constructing her mental walls, but after a good two weeks she had finally found something. Harry pestered her for a week to tell him what imagery she used to start defending her mind, but every time she refused and

said it was private. Harry was annoyed, but eventually let it drop and began describing how she should go about building her first mental wall.

Harry's Occulmency was also progressing rather well. He now had three completed mental walls and he was busy constructing his fourth. His fourth wall though was unlike the other ones. After the ease Harry had building his third mental wall, Salazar wanted him to try something more difficult. Harry's fourth mental wall was that of a large fence with barbed wire around it. Unlike his other mental walls, Salazar had him start his fourth mental defense further away from the others three walls. Salazar had previously told him that by building his walls practically on top of each other would take an invading mind longer to breach. By building his fourth mental defense further away from the other three, his fourth mental wall would be weaker than the other mental barriers; however, it would alert him of an incoming attacker before they reached his main defenses.

Harry had finally received a letter from the Malfoys inviting him and Tonks to the manor on the fourteenth of July. Harry wrote back asking for the portkey time to be changed to the fifteenth as Tonks would be leaving to go to France on the Fifteenth as well. Mr. Malfoy had immediately provided a new portkey for him, and wished Tonks well on her trip.

Tonks would be returning from France on the 29th and Harry was adamant that she come to the manor to celebrate his birthday. Unfortunately, Mrs. Tonks had overheard them talking and promptly said that Tonks would never set foot in Malfoy Manor. This led to a rather large argument between Tonks and her mother. In the end, Mrs. Tonks banned Tonks from going, and Tonks hadn't spoken to her since.

The day of the fifteenth arrived and Harry, Salazar, and Dobby departed the Dursleys. Harry had to fight a strong urge to tell Dobby to place silencing wards up and then letting Salazar have at them in their sleep. While the Dursleys better than they ever had been, Harry still wanted to do nothing more than to make them sorry for what they had done to him. Once they were outside, Dobby placed an invisibility charm around himself and Harry's trunk. The three of them

proceeded to walk to Tonks' house at six in the morning. Harry walked up the stairs to her room and found a rather annoyed Tonks rushing around looking for her clothing.

"Busy Tonks?" Harry asked from her doorway.

"Harry! I can't believe you stopped by." Tonks said as she brought him into a hug.

"Yes, well I can't have my friend going to a foreign country without saying goodbye." Harry said with a smile.

"Oh this is great you can help me pack!" Tonks said excitedly as Harry groaned.

"Why don't you just do that packing spell?" Harry asked.

"Because we can't do magic over the holiday, stupid." Tonks said exasperatedly.

"So get your mum to do it." Harry said.

"We...er...had another fight last night." Tonks admitted sheepishly.

"Oh Merlin, another one. What was the topic of this fight? Wait let me guess was it about Draco or myself?" Harry asked.

Tonks just sighed, "You, we were talking about all the shops in Paris, and I mentioned wanting to get you a birthday gift. One thing led to another, and now we aren't speaking."

"I'm sorry, Tonks, but I'm sure once you get into the shops you'll forget all about that stuff." Harry said with a smile.

"Yea, maybe." Tonks said sadly.

"It'll get better, Tonks." Harry said.

"Harry...If I don't get to see you on your birthday...er...happy birthday in advance." Tonks said disappointment dripping in her voice.

"Tonks don't worry about it. You'll see me on my birthday. If your mum won't let you go to the manor, we'll just all go to Diagon Alley that day to pick up our stuff for school." Harry said.

Tonks faced brightened, "Promise?" She asked.

"Of course, now I've got a gift for you." Harry said with a grin.

"A gift?" Tonks asked bouncing up and down in excitement.

"Well, more like a loan I guess. I figured that if you ever wanted to explore Paris by yourself without your mum finding out, you could use this." Harry said as he handed Tonks his invisibility cloak.

"Harry...I can't take your cloak. What if I lose it? I mean it was your Dad's." Tonks said pushing it away.

"Please Tonks, you might find some use for it, and I don't use it that much. Besides I trust you not to lose it." Harry said.

Tonks blushed at Harry's compliment and accepted the cloak from him with a smile. "I'll take good care of it." She said.

"I know you will." Harry said with a grin.

Harry helped Tonks pack the rest of her belongings, and at 7:59, Harry hugged Tonks, wished her well on her trip, and grabbed his trunk. A minute later, his portkey activated, and he was taken to Malfoy Manor.

Malfoy Manor, Unplotable

The portkey dropped Harry off in the middle of Malfoy Manor. Harry was glad he was still keyed into the wards so he didn't go smashing into the ground with his trunk.

"Ah Harry you have arrived." Lucius said.

"Yes, thank you for the invitation again, Lucius." Harry replied with a smile.

Lucius just waved him off. "I'm sorry we weren't able to get you away from your relatives sooner, Harry."

"Well it actually wasn't so bad this year. I spent most of my time at Tonks' actually." Harry said.

"Yes, it's a pity that Tonks won't be able to join you here. Draco tells me that she and her mother are arguing rather badly right now." Lucius said.

"Yes, I don't think Mrs. Tonks is really all that happy with Draco and Tonks being friends." Harry said.

"Well that's Andromeda for you. Once that woman has an opinion, you can't get her to change it. Draco told me that professor Dumbledore's phoenix also paid you a visit this summer." Lucius said as they began walking towards the kitchen.

"No offense, Lucius, but I don't want to talk about the headmaster right now." Harry said through gritted teeth.

"I understand. So how is your Occulmency coming along? I'm actually rather proud of how well Draco has come along with his study. I suspect he will begin building his first mental wall any day now." Lucius said.

"That's good. I've already built up three mental walls and I'm working on my fourth. Tonks has almost completed one of her mental walls as well." Harry said casually.

"You have three walls already built and my niece has already begun constructing one." Lucius said in amazement.

"Yes, Salazar helped us with some advice that wasn't in the Occulmency book she purchased." Harry admitted.

"Ah well perhaps you'll be able to work with Draco some." Lucius said as they took seats in the kitchen.

"I'm sure I will." Harry said.

"Good. Trixi." Lucius called.

The little elf appeared with a pop.

"Yes, master Malfoy." Trixi said.

"Harry's trunk is in the second living room. Please take it up to the room you prepared for him." Lucius said dismissively.

"Yes, master Malfoy." Trixi said as she disappeared with another pop.

"Oh Lucius, I'd like to thank you for letting me borrow Dobby." Harry said.

"He wasn't a bother was he? After that daft elf took your mail, I was ready to bash it's skull in for its stupidity." Lucius said in annoyance.

"No he wasn't a bother at all. Actually he was rather useful once Tonks got him to stop worshiping me every ten seconds. In fact he was so useful I was hoping you could tell me where I might be able to get an elf of my own?" Harry asked.

"Oh well most house elves are inherited through bloodlines. I'm quite sure that being the heir to four families there are most likely several elves that are bound to you, but if you want a personal elf, then we will have to go to Knockturn Alley." Lucius said.

"Why Knockturn Alley?" Harry asked.

"Ah well once an elf is free or not bonded into a family. They usually seek out a temporary bond. A man in Knockturn Alley bonds many of those elves to him and then sells them out of his shop. Of course this is all highly illegal. There is an old law that states someone may only have two personal elves bonded to his person and not to his family." Lucius said.

"I see. When do you think we could go?" Harry asked.

"Well, I suppose we will go when we get Draco and your school supplies. I need to visit Knockturn anyway." Lucius said.

"Oh why's that? If you can tell me that is." Harry said.

Lucius' face darkened. "Cornelius was kind enough to give me and some of my friends the heads up that Arthur Weasley has been given the go ahead by the DMLE to start conducting raids to find dark objects."

"I see, but surely Weasley wouldn't dare try to raid the manor." Harry said in shock.

"Arthur Weasley and I hate each other. I have no doubt the manor will be among the first places targeted." Lucius said in annoyance.

"So why are you going to Knockturn Alley because of this?" Harry asked.

"Ah well you see there are merchants in Knockturn Alley that will purchase some of the objects I do not have a purpose for. Those that are important or family memorabilia I've almost completed finished storing in the Malfoy family vault in Gringotts." Lucius said.

Harry was about to reply when Draco entered the room. "Hey Harry." Draco said with a grin.

"Hi Draco, how was Italy?" Harry asked.

"Eh it was alright, great food." Draco drawled.

"Great food, Draco! What about the culture? The exquisite history? The Museums alone made the trip worthy." Narcissa said entering the room.

"Yea that was good too." Draco said with a smile.

"Hello Harry, how are you?" Narcissa asked.

"I'm doing well ma'am. Thank you for having me." Harry said.

"Oh it's no problem Harry. I just wish you could have come sooner, but I understand you were practically living with Nymphadora." Narcissa said.

"Yes, much to her mother's annoyance." Harry said.

"Yes, well Andy always was stubborn. I hope Tonks will be at least able to come here for your birthday." Narcissa said.

"Er I wanted to talk to you about that. It looks like she won't be able to come to the manor. Do you think that we might be able to go to Diagon Alley that day so that we can all hang out?" Harry asked.

"I suppose that would be fine. Since it is only two weeks away, we can have our trip to Knockturn Alley the same day." Lucius said.

"Knockturn Alley?" Draco asked with a grin.

"Yes, I have business there and Harry wishes to purchase a personal elf." Lucius said.

"Really why?" Draco asked Harry.

Harry just rolled his eyes. Draco was a great friend, but sometimes his prejudice against non-wizards were just idiotic. "Draco elves are dead useful. You probably don't realize how useful since you've grown up with three of them serving you. Besides I don't have an owl and an elf will be able to carry my mail." Harry said with a smirk.

"That's one expensive owl, Harry. Besides what are you going to do with it when you are at Hogwarts? I mean the teachers barely put up with Salazar. Do you think they'll let you have your own personal elf." Draco drawled.

"That's a good question. Lucius what do you suggest?" Harry asked.

Lucius seemed to think for a moment. "I suppose you could take it with you and allow it to work at Hogwarts when you are not using it.

That way Hogwarts gets another house elf for the kitchens and you would still be able to summon it.”

“Do you think the headmaster would allow that?” Harry asked.

”I’ll bring it up at the next board meeting in a few weeks. I’ll get their approval and take it out of the headmaster’s hands.” Lucius said with a grin.

Harry just smirked. He loved that Mr. Malfoy had a certain authority over the headmaster because of his position on the board. “I appreciate that, sir.” Harry said with a grin.

”So Harry do you want to go play som...” Draco stopped abruptly though when two large brown owls swooped into the kitchen and landed in front of Harry and Draco.

“Ah it looks like your first year grades have arrived boys.” Lucius said as Draco and Harry paled slightly.

”Now there is no need to be nervous. I’m sure both of you did very well.” Narcissa said. The words or else were left unsaid as Harry and Draco took the letters.

”Father, Mother before we open these letters, I feel obligated to say that I most certainly failed history of magic.” Draco said quickly.

”Er yea me too.” Harry said.

Both Lucius and Narcissa looked rather annoyed. “Open the letters.” They said together.

Harry gulped. He was use to being nervous about opening report cards in front of the Dursleys if he ever did better then Dudley, which was always, he was punished for cheating. This time though, Harry was nervous that he would disappoint the Malfoys. Saying a silent prayer, Harry quickly opened his letter. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Draco doing the same.

Dear Mr. Potter

Congratulations on completing your first year at Hogwarts school of witchcraft and Wizardry. Below are the marks for your first term and the first year class rankings. The class rankings are done by averaging your marks. Note that an Outstanding is equal to six points, Exceeds Expectations five points, Acceptable four points, Poor three points, Dreadful one point, and Troll negative one point..

Minerva M. McGonagall

Deputy Headmistress

Harry James Potter, Slytherin House.

Class, Grade, House Rank, Year Rank.

Astronomy- O- 2nd, 8th.

Charms- O- 1st, 1st

Defense against the Dark Arts- O-1st, 1st

Herbology-O-2th, 6th

History of magic-P-8th, 43rd

Potions- O- 4th, 9th

Transfiguration-O-1st, 1st

Overall Grade- Exceeds Expectations/Outstanding

Year Rank- 4th

Top Ten First Years

Name, House, Overall Grade

1. Hermione Granger, Gryffindor – Outstanding

2. Terry Boot, Ravenclaw- Outstanding
3. Su Li, Ravenclaw- Outstanding
4. Harry Potter- Slytherin- Exceeds Expectations/ Outstanding
5. Padma Patil, Ravenclaw- Exceeds Expectations/ Outstanding
6. Lisa Turpin, Ravenclaw- Exceeds Expectations
7. Susan Bones, Hufflepuff- Exceeds Expectations
8. Draco Malfoy, Slytherin- Exceeds Expectations
9. Blaise Zabini, Slytherin- Exceeds Expectations
- Goldstein, Ravenclaw- Exceeds Expectations

Harry put down his letter. "Wow." He said in shock.

"Wanna Swap?" Draco asked with a grin.

Harry handed Draco his letter and Draco gave Harry his. Harry quickly scanned Draco's letter.

Astronomy- E, 4th, 18th

Charms- O, 2nd, 3rd

Defense against the Dark Arts- O, 2nd, 2nd

Herbology- A- 7th, 39th

History of Magic- P, 5th, 37th

Potions- O, 1st, 1st

Transfiguration- O, 2nd, 3rd

Overall Grade Exceeds Expectations

Numerical Grade 5.14

House Rank- 2nd

Year Rank-8th

"Not bad, Draco." Harry said with a grin.

"You too, Harry." Draco said.

"Will you two tell us already. The suspense is killing me." Narcissa said in annoyance.

Harry and Draco smiled. "Well we both failed History of Magic." Harry said with a grin.

Seeing that Mr. and Mrs. Malfoy were actually starting to get truly annoyed with them, Harry said, "We also both got O's in Charms, Defense against the Dark Arts, Potions, and Transfiguration."

"What about Astronomy?" Lucius asked

"I got an Outstanding." Harry said.

"I got an Exceeds Expectations." Draco said.

Lucius nodded his head in approval at both grades.

"Herbology?" Narcissa asked.

"I got an Outstanding." Harry said with a big grin.

"I got an Acceptable." Draco said rolling his eyes.

"You would have got an Outstanding as well if you just would have asked Neville for help." Harry chided.

"I don't need the help of that Squib." Draco said.

"Well I guarantee you that Neville probably got tops in Herbology." Harry muttered.

"Whatever it's just plants." Draco said.

"How did you rank in the classes you got Outstandings in?" Lucius asked.

"I got tops in Potions, father." Draco said smiling.

"Excellent job, Draco. I'm sure your godfather will be very proud. Severus did say that you were his best student all year." Lucius said proudly.

"How about your other classes?" Narcissa asked.

"Well I'm second in Defense against the Dark Arts, Third in Transfiguration and Third in Charms." Draco said.

"That's very good as well, Draco, but I thought you said you expected to be second in both Transfiguration and Charms?" Narcissa asked.

"I know. I don't know who could have done better than me." Draco admitted.

"I'd bet it was Granger in Transfiguration, Draco. McGonagall likes her and if push came to shove she would probably want to put a Gryffindor over a Slytherin." Harry said.

"A mudblood. A mudblood beat you, Draco." Lucius said darkly.

"She's the top student." Harry said quickly launching to Draco's aide.

"I don't believe this." Lucius said shaking his head in frustration.

"I'm sorry, father." Draco said hanging his head in shame.

"What about Charms?" Narcissa asked showing just as much contempt as Lucius.

"I don't know, Harry any ideas?" Draco asked.

"Su Li most likely." Harry said.

"Who the hell is that anyway. I mean we have charms with the Ravenclaws and I have no idea who that girl is." Draco said.

"She's that tiny Asian girl who sits behind Terry Boot. She doesn't ever raise her hand and she's incredibly quiet, but she is very good at the subject." Harry said.

"Any relation to Chan Li?" Lucius asked.

"I don't know Li is a pretty common name." Harry said.

"It's not a common name among wizards, Harry, especially in England. Chan Li is the Chinese Ministry's Ambassador. He's a very influential and wealthy pureblood." Lucius said.

"Perhaps I'll have to speak with her this year." Harry commented.

"Yes, Draco you should get to know Ms. Li as well. Her father is very powerful internationally as well as a Charms Master." Lucius said.

Harry was glad that Lucius didn't seem to have any problem with Draco being bested by Su Li. Lucius clearly didn't mind Draco being beaten out by a pureblood witch with a charms master for a father.

"How about you Harry?" Narcissa asked.

"Well I was tops in Charms and Transfiguration of course. I was also first in Defense, sixth in Herbology, eighth in Astronomy and ninth in Potions." Harry said.

"That's very impressive Harry. What was your overall ranking?" Lucius asked.

"I was fourth overall in the year with a grade of Exceeds Expectations/ Outstanding." Harry said.

"Fourth? Who beat you those are impressive scores." Narcissa asked.

"Er...Granger, Terry Boot, and Su Li all had outstanding overall. How exactly do they rank them if they all had perfect scores?" Harry asked.

"Oh, they look at their ranking on the exams and then order them accordingly." Lucius said.

"Draco did you make it into the top ten?" Narcissa asked.

"Yes mother, I'm eighth overall." Draco said proudly.

"That's very good Draco. Who was ahead of you?" Lucius said.

"Harry, two Ravenclaws, and Susan Bones." Draco said.

"Really, well I suppose Amelia's niece takes after her. Who were the last two on the list?" Lucius asked.

"Blaise Zabini and another Ravenclaw named Goldstein." Harry answered.

"You are friends with the young Zabini, right?" Narcissa asked.

"Yes, Harry and I are friends with him and Susan Bones." Draco said.

Lucius nodded his head in approval. "Well you both did an excellent job this year. I expect you to keep it up though."

"We will father." Draco said.

"I wonder how Nymphadora did." Narcissa said.

"Oh I imagine she did really well. McGonagall told me over Christmas that she was tops in Defense and Charms as well as among the top in Transfiguration." Harry said.

"Yea and Uncle Severus started to go a little bit easier on her this year." Draco said.

"Yea not much though, she is still a Gryffindor." Harry commented.

"Oh I don't think Severus really sees her as one anymore though, Harry." Lucius said.

"Really why?" Harry asked.

"After Nymphadora asked for a transfer into Slytherin, Severus seemed to have a soft spot for her. At least he alluded to that over dinner, when we had him over during April. I think knowing that one of McGonagall's Gryffindors so desperately wanted to defect to his house caused him to re-evaluate the girl." Narcissa said.

"Really, wow. I never noticed." Harry said.

"Yes well, we aren't in her potions class. I bet he doesn't treat her like the other Gryffindors. Didn't you notice that she stopped complaining about uncle Severus' class?" Draco said.

"Yea I did notice th..." Harry stopped talking though when a very loud ringing echoed through the kitchen.

"Someone just breached the manor's outer wards." Lucius said as he drew his wand.

Harry, Draco, and Narcissa all drew their wands at the same time.

"Boys get upstairs." Narcissa said.

"No, we stick together if we separate they could be attacked and we couldn't protect them." Lucius said as he waved his wand and taped Harry, Draco, Narcissa, and himself.

Harry felt a chill run down his spine and then looked at Lucius. He was shocked to see that he could barely see him. He completely blended in with the surroundings.

"I've placed a disillusionment charm on us. Let's go." Lucius said.

Harry made a mental note to talk to Flitwick about that charm as they walked out of the kitchen. They walked down a flight of stairs and down a hallway. When they reached the main entrance, Harry spotted a man with his wand drawn, standing by himself. He was wearing bright purple robes with red lining. Lucius, Narcissa, and Draco clearly didn't see him. Not wanting to blow their cover by informing Lucius, Harry drew his wand and shouted, "Expelliarmus!"

The man turned around just in time to see Harry's spell strike him in the chest. Harry was shocked though when the man flicked his wrist drawing another wand.

"Stupefy!" The man shouted.

Harry dodged the stunning spell and sent one back at the man.

"Suddenly several more people entered the room all firing stunning spells. Harry dropped to the ground and shouted, "Diffindo, Expelliarmus," at the nearest man.

Harry grinned as his cutting curse struck the man's wand arm causing him to drop his wand. The disarming spell flung him across the room a half a second later.

"STOP HARRY! STOP NOW!" Lucius yelled as he removed all the disillusionment charm.

Harry turned to look at Lucius in disbelief. His laps in concentration cost him though when several men hit him with a myriad of spells. A disarming spell caused him to lose his wand and smash against the wall. Before he was stunned, two more spells struck him causing an arm and a leg to break.

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Harry woke up and let out a muffled scream. He looked over to his left arm and gasped. The bone in his arm was exposed.

"Mr. Potter try to relax." A woman said.

Harry looked around in a panic. He appeared to be in a hospital bed.

"Where am I?" Harry asked.

"You are in St. Mungos, Mr. Potter. From what I understand, you were involved in an altercation with some Aurors." The woman said.

"What are Aurors?" Harry asked.

"Oh I'm sorry, I forgot you lived with muggles for a little. They are like police, Mr. Potter. They were there to supervise Mr. Arthur Weasley when he went in search of dark objects." The woman said.

"Who are you?" Harry asked.

"Oh where are my manners. I'm Healer Smith. Now I'm sorry to say, but I can't mend your arm. Now this won't hurt, Mr. Potter, but I'm going to vanish the bones in your left arm. I meant to do it before the stunning spell wore off." Healer Smith said as the woman muttered an incantation.

Harry watched as she sent a blue spell at his arm. As soon as it hit, Harry felt so much better. The pain in his arm was instantly gone, but his arm just hung loosely. It was a rather odd sight to see his arm just flopping around.

"You're going to fix that right?" Harry asked as he poked his glove like arm.

"Yes, Mr. Potter, but I'm sorry to say you are in for a long night. Skelo-Grow isn't the most comfortable potion." Healer Smith said.

"Great, do you happen to know where Mr. Malfoy is?" Harry asked.

The healer just shook her head in the negative.

Harry was about to ask another question when the door to his room opened and Draco, Lucius, Narcissa, an intimidating looking woman, and a portly man wearing a bowler hat entered the room.

"Harry how are you?" Draco asked.

"I've been better." Harry said as he waved his boneless arm.

"Was it really necessary to remove the bone?" The portly man asked.

"Unfortunately Minister. Believe me I would not subject a child to Skelo-Grow unless it was necessary. The bone could not be mended, and Re-growing it is the only way to insure he doesn't have any lasting damage." Healer Smith said.

The man Harry assumed to be Minister Fudge winced slightly.

"Mr. Potter, I am Amelia Bones the head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement. I would like to apologize on behalf of all the Aurors who attacked you. By failing to identify themselves when they entered Malfoy Manor, they broke several very important search and seizure laws. I can not express how sorry I am that you have to re-grow bones because of their idiocy. I just hope that you do not blame our entire department for the failures of a few Aurors, who have all been suspended for their breach of protocol." Amelia Bones said.

Harry nodded his head. "It's alright Madam Bones. Susan has told me too many good things about you for me to ever blame you or your department for what happened today." Harry said.

Harry noticed the minister relaxed a lot at his words. "Mr. Potter, I am Minister of Magic Cornelius Fudge. I am so sorry that this event ever took place. Senior Auror McNeil and Arthur Weasley knew the protocol, but apparently in Mr. Weasley's haste to ensure no artifacts were hidden, they forgot. Know that I have spoken very harshly with Mr. Weasley and he is waiting out in the hall to offer an apology." Minister Fudge said.

"Thank you Minister, I just hope nothing like this happens again." Harry said.

"I assure you Mr. Potter it will not. I just hope that you do not lose faith in the Ministry or myself because of this mishap." Minister Fudge said.

"Don't worry Minister; I don't hold you responsible after all it wasn't your fault. The protocol as Madam Bones said was there to insure incidents like this didn't happen, it just wasn't followed." Harry said.

"Well, I thank you Mr. Potter. I was hoping though that we could perhaps keep this incident out of the papers." Minister Fudge said hesitantly.

Harry was at first shocked that the Minister was asking that. After a few seconds, Harry realized that the Minister was actually starting to sweat. Deciding that he needed to give at least some answer, Harry said, "I don't see anything I could possibly gain from informing the press of this Minister."

Harry enjoyed watching the Minister sag in relief. "Thank you for that, Mr. Potter. Know that Amelia and I agree that you will face no charges of underage magic as this was the ministry's fault. Also if I can ever do anything for you, please let me know. Lucius has told me nothing but good things about you, and I would be only too happy to assist you if you require it." Minister Fudge said.

"I'll keep that in mind, Minister, thank you." Harry said as he mentally smirked. It was nice to know he had some blackmail on the ministry if he ever needed it.

"Madam Bones it was a pleasure to meet you, and please tell Susan and Blaise that I'm looking forward to joining them at the beach at the end of the summer." Harry said.

Madam Bones hid her shock at the news that Harry Potter would be visiting them at the beach. When she thought about it though it did make sense, Susan had said Mr. Potter was in Slytherin along with Mr. Zabini, and that they were all friends. "I will look forward to seeing you at the end of the summer then, Mr. Potter." Amelia said with a smile.

"Well if you'll excuse me, Mr. Potter, I must be getting back to the Ministry." Minister Fudge said.

"Of course Minister." Harry said as Fudge bowed slightly and left.

"I also must be going, Mr. Potter, but I look forward to seeing you at the beach. Susan and Mr. Zabini have told me nothing but good things about you." Ameila said as she also bowed slightly and departed.

When healer Smith departed to go get the Skelo-Grow, Mr. Malfoy leaned in to speak to Harry. "Harry, I'd like to thank you. After you were injured and Cornelius found out what had happened, the raid was immediately terminated. I had some very controversial objects in my study that I was planning on taking to Gringotts later today. I would have had to answer a lot of annoying questions about them."

"I'm glad something good came out of this." Harry whispered back as the door opened and a red haired man stepped into the room.

Harry eyed the man, who had to be Arthur Weasley, with distain.

"Can I help you?" Harry asked pretending he didn't know the man.

"Er...yes, Harry. I'm Arthur Weasley." Mr. Weasley said.

"First of all Mr. Weasley, you may address me as Mr. Potter. I may be on a first name basis with your daughter, but I certainly am not with you. Minister Fudge and Madam Bones both had no problem addressing me as such, and I would have expected you to do the same. Now what exactly can I do for you." Harry said confidently.

Harry smirked as the man's face colored with embarrassment and slight anger at being put in his place by a soon to be second year Hogwarts student. "I am sorry, Mr. Potter. I forgot myself. We have never been introduced so it was presumptuous of me to address you by your first name. My daughter speaks very highly of you, and I'd like to apologize for what happened today. Those Aurors were under my supervision, and in my haste I broke protocol." Mr. Weasley said.

"So I've already been told." Harry said evenly.

"Mr. Potter drink this." Healer Smith said as she walked into the room and handed him a chalk white potion.

Harry quickly downed the thick potion and winced at its taste. A second after he had finished it, Harry grimaced. A sharp aching pain started to build in his left arm. Harry looked up and saw very sympathetic faces from everyone especially from Arthur Weasley.

"You had to use Skelo-Grow for his arm." Mr. Weasley said.

"That is obvious Weasley. Now that you've apologized, leave so that Harry can heal in peace." Lucius said dismissively.

Mr. Weasley sighed. "I am sorry again, Mr. Potter." Mr. Weasley said as he turned to leave.

"Wait, Mr. Weasley." Harry said as an idea popped into his head.

Mr. Weasley turned around wondering what the boy who lived had to say to him.

"Dobby." Harry called.

The small elf popped into the room and looked at Harry with wide eyes.

"Is Mister Harry Potter alright?" Dobby asked.

"I'll be fine Dobby. Can you go into my trunk and retrieve my latest letter to Ginny Weasley." Harry said.

Dobby nodded and popped away. A second later he returned with the letter.

"Mr. Weasley could you give Ginny this letter for me. It would save me time if you brought it too her." Harry said.

Arthur took the letter albeit a bit hesitantly. "I will give it to her, Mr. Potter. I am again terribly sorry this happened, and I hope you get well soon." Mr. Weasley said as he left the room.

As soon as the door closed behind Mr. Weasley, Harry laughed, but then winced at the pain in his arm.

"What's so funny, Harry?" Draco asked.

"Oh, I'm just thinking about how he will have to explain too Ginny how he got the letter from me. I'm sure she will just love that her father is responsible for putting me in the hospital." Harry said as Draco grinned madly.

A/N Well I hope everyone liked it. Two more Summer chapters to go! Also I have good news. I wrote the last 2,000 words of this story last night. Now that does not mean I have completed the story, I just wrote the final 2.000 words. I'm sure I've got at least a few hundred thousand words between now and the ending. However, I am very happy that I wrote the end of the story. One of my fears was that I couldn't see an ending to this story, and I would end up abandoning this story. Now I don't have to worry about that though, and it's a relief. Since I'm not following HBP and DH, writing the last 2000 words also gave me a lot of ideas about where I'm going to take the story during years 6 and 7. Finally thanks to everyone who reads this story and leaves a review.

## CHAPTER 16

### Summer Days Part 2

It took an entire day for Harry to re-grow all the bones in his left arm, and another two days making sure that all the nerves, muscles, and joints were working properly. When Harry was finally able to leave St. Mungo's, he vowed to never return.

The next two weeks at Malfoy Manor passed by very quickly for Harry. Harry informed Draco what Salazar told him about Occulmency, and Draco had completed his first mental barrier. Harry had completed his fourth and fifth mental walls, and was beginning to work on his sixth. Whenever Salazar wasn't hunting the grounds, Harry's familiar would provide any advice that he could too the two young wizards.

Tonks had sent Harry and Draco a letter from France. Apparently she and her mum were still not speaking, and Tonks had just started to explore Paris by herself. She was spending most of her time in the French version of Diagon Alley, Chuchoter l'Allée. Mr. Malfoy said that that the name was roughly translated to Whisper Alley. Tonks closed the letter by saying she was looking forward to seeing both of them on Harry's birthday at Diagon Alley.

Draco and Harry spent most of their free time practicing Quidditch out on Nathaniel Pitch. The two of them would constantly go over the pros and cons of Harry changing positions. On one hand, Harry had never lost a match as Slytherin's Seeker; however, it clearly wasn't his best position. Finally they decided that if a half decent Seeker showed up, Harry would move to chaser. Otherwise he would remain as the Slytherin Seeker.

Harry continued to read the book Advanced Charm Theory. Harry had read about up too about where an advanced third year should have been in the book. Harry really did love professor Flitwick for getting him the book. Even if he couldn't do any practical charms work over the summer, Flitwick had at least given him a way to get ahead in theory.

Harry's letters with Ginny Weasley also continued. Harry and Draco burst out laughing at the huge apology letter Ginny sent him for her

father's mistake when he raided Malfoy Manor. By the time that the two boys had finished reading, Draco had tears in his eyes from laughing so hard. They had decided to simply give a short reply saying that she didn't have to apologize for as she did nothing wrong.

Slowly, Harry and Draco were noticing that the youngest Weasley was starting to stand apart from her family. She had told Harry that she had completely stopped talking with Ron, Percy, and the twins. She also got into a large row with her father after he put Harry in the hospital. She described how angry she got when her mother constantly babied and talked down to her like she was two. In fact, Ginny openly admitted that the only people she even remotely enjoyed speaking with were Bill and Charlie, and they were both abroad. In her last letter, she confided in Harry that if it weren't for his letters over the summer, she would probably have gone insane.

Harry and Draco just grinned wildly after they finished the letter. Harry's plan to turn the youngest Weasley into a Slytherin was coming along even better than he had ever planned.

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Harry woke up at seven in the morning on his birthday. When he sat up in his bed, he had a large grin plastered on his face. He had a feeling that today was going to be a good day. It was his birthday, he was meeting up with Tonks in Diagon Alley, he was going to get his personal elf, and he would be getting all his new school stuff.

Harry made his way down to the kitchen where he found Mr. Malfoy eating some eggs and sausage with Mrs. Malfoy.

"Happy Birthday, Harry." Lucius said when Harry walked into the kitchen.

"Happy Birthday, dear." Narcissa added with a smile

"Thank you, Lucius, Narcissa. Is Draco still asleep?" Harry said.

"I believe he is in the shower. I woke him up a little while ago. We really do need to get going. It's going to be a very long day, and we

still need to go to Gringotts. If you are serious about getting an elf, you are going to need some serious coin to make the purchase. We might have to get you a bottomless money bag for the day.” Lucius said.

”How much are elves, sir?” Harry asked.

”Well that depends. An old elf near the end of his life will be rather inexpensive say seventy gallions. A middle aged elf will most likely be around a hundred gallions. A elf who is in their prime would be around two hundred and fifty gallions. And a young elf will cost you around five hundred gallions.” Lucius said.

”What do you think I should get?” Harry asked.

”You are well off financially with the Potter vaults that you should be able to choose whatever elf you would like, Harry. Don’t worry about the price; just make sure that the elf you choose is the one you like. After all, you will most likely have to put up with the little creature for most of your life.” Narcissa said.

”That makes sense.” Harry said as Draco came into the kitchen.

”What makes sense?” Draco asked.

”Oh your mum was just telling me that I shouldn’t worry about the cost of the elf I want. Lucius did the board of governors agree to letting me bring an elf to school?” Harry asked.

”Yes, the board to agree to a bill that allows any student’s personal elf to serve Hogwarts if the master wishes his elf to be close at hand at school. The only catch is that you will not be allowed to summon it during class as it would be a distraction.” Lucius said.

”That makes sense.” Harry replied.

”Draco, Harry eat quickly, I want to get to Gringotts before the crowd gets too big.” Lucius said as he stood up.

Draco and Harry nodded and began to quickly their breakfast.

At fifteen past eight, Harry and Draco finished their breakfast and Lucius removed a portkey.

"Minister Fudge provided us with a portkey that will take us directly into Gringotts boys. Harry I want you to change your appearance, and then put up your hood. Draco raise your hood up as well. I don't expect any trouble in Gringotts, but I don't want anyone to recognize us and then follow us into Knockturn Alley." Lucius said.

Harry nodded and used his metamorphmagus skill to spike his hair and turn it blond. He also hid his scar, and changed his eyes to a very light blue. When he was done, he raised his hood and took the portkey with Lucius and Draco. He felt the familiar pull behind the navel as they left Malfoy Manor.

Gringotts, Diagon Alley

Harry, Draco, and Lucius landed in the marble flooring inside of Gringotts Wizarding Bank. At the early hour, the bank was practically deserted. Lucius led Harry and Draco up to the counter with a free Goblin.

"How may I help you?" The Goblin asked icily as he eyed them with distrust.

Lucius nodded to Harry, and Harry dropped his hood. "I need to withdraw some money from my vault and possibly get a bottomless money bag." Harry said.

"I see, do you have your key, sir?" The Goblin asked.

"No, it was never given to me. I was supposed to get it last year; however, I was taken to a meeting with Director Horik and in the confusion it was never turned over to me." Harry said.

The Goblin looked clearly taken aback by Harry's flippant way of mentioning the Director of Gringotts. "Your name sir?" The Goblin asked this time with a lot more politeness.

"Harry Potter." Harry responded quietly.

The Goblin eyed in him with wide eyes for a full minute before he said, "Mr. Potter, please place one drop of blood on the counter to confirm your identity." The Goblin said as he extended a small pen knife to Harry.

Harry pricked a finger and let a drop of blood fall on the counter.

The Goblin withdrew a key from underneath the counter and placed it on the blood. The key immediately lit up and glowed. A vault number was inscribed on the key. "I see everything is in order, Mr. Potter, here is your key." The Goblin said.

"Thank you sir." Harry said.

"Mr. Potter, I'm afraid that the Director will wish to speak with you." The Goblin said before Harry could walk away.

"Why?" Harry asked.

"I do not know Mr. Potter, but all teller Goblins have been told that should you arrive, you are to be summoned to the Director immediately. Griphook will escort you. Your guests must remain here though." The Teller Goblin said.

"I see. Well Mr. Malfoy perhaps you should go do your business in Knockturn Alley while I'm meeting with the Director." Harry said quietly.

Lucius Malfoy just shook his head in shock. "Er no Harry, I'll just put off that bit of business for another time. Draco and I shall wait for your meeting to be done." Lucius said.

Harry nodded his head and followed the Goblin named Griphook through several corridors up to the same room Harry visited over a year ago. Two large security Goblins glared at them as they approached.

Griphook stepped forward importantly. "Harry Potter to see Director Horik and the council."

The two Goblins nodded and opened the doors for them to pass.

Harry instantly noticed that the room had not changed at all in a year. There was still a large round table with several annoyed looking Goblins sitting at it.

"Goblin what is the meaning of this interruption." Horik said sharply.

"Director Horik, I have brought Harry Potter to your summons." Griphook said as he bowed deeply.

"Very well you are excused, Goblin." Horik said sharply.

Griphook backed out of the room and the doors closed.

" Mr. Potter please take a seat." Horik said as a chair appeared at the far end of the table. Several Goblins moved out of the way to make room for Harry to sit down.

"Director Horik I'm sorry, but I don't know why I'm here." Harry admitted as he sat down.

The director just grinned toothily. "We have summoned you to deliver our report on the fraud committed against your account, Mr. Potter. When we realized that you would not receive any information via Owl. We had to wait for you to enter the bank. Sending a Goblin to inform you would have been obvious as to who was trying to contact you. Informing a human employee or an elf could have resulted in the perpetrator finding out that we were on to him." Horik said.

"So you found out what why I am still not receiving any mail from you?" Harry asked.

"Indeed, it seems as though your magical guardian, Albus Dumbledore, has been intercepting all your mail from Gringotts. It seems that a majority of your mail goes into a ministry screening room as you are a celebrity of sorts in the wizarding world. Dumbledore used his influence as Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot

to direct your Gringotts letters there where he collected them once a month.” Horik said.

As soon as Horik said Albus Dumbledore, Harry began to get enraged. That manipulative bastard! He’s been keeping my financially information from me, how dare he! “Horik what can be done to stop this.” Harry said sharply.

Several of the Goblins grinned madly at him.

“I’m very glad that you wish to do something, Mr. Potter. Most wizards or witches would simply accept Dumbledore’s actions as for the best. To answer your question, we would remove Dumbledore as your Magical Financial Guardian. He violated the terms of agreement by not showing you your statements.” Horik said.

“Excellent, do so immediately.” Harry said.

“Unfortunately it isn’t that easy. While we can remove Dumbledore from any financial aspect of your guardianship, he would still retain the overall title.” Horik said.

“What! Why?” Harry said strongly.

“To have Dumbledore removed completely, you must petition the ministry. We would of course provide you with all the information we have collected against him if you seek to do so.” Horik said.

“I’d appreciate that.” Harry said.

“Now do you have someone you trust to handle your trust fund vault? You will need a temporary magical financial guardian until you are sixteen years of age.” Horik said.

“Lucius Malfoy should be fine.” Harry said.

“Very well we will send the necessary papers to Mr. Malfoy later today. We are again sorry for this, Mr. Potter. Is there anything else Gringotts can do for you today?” Horik asked.

"Er well I needed a bottomless money bag for the day." Harry said.

Horik snapped his long fingers and a Goblin ran out of the room. A few moments later he returned, and handed Harry a brown pouch.

"Please put your key into the pouch, Mr. Potter." Horik said.

Harry did as the Director said and he watched as the pouch absorbed the key and then displayed a rather large number.

"The number you just saw was the total amount of gold in your trust vault." Horik said.

"Merlin." Harry said in shock.

"Yes, well having not touched your vault for twelve years, it has compiled a great deal of interest. Not to mention that the vault receives a certain amount of coin annually from the main Potter vault." Horik said.

Harry just numbly nodded, still in shock that his trust vault had so much money. And to think he was scared that buying an elf would burden him financially.

"If that is all you need, Mr. Potter, you may leave. We will begin to process the paperwork to remove Albus Dumbledore as your Magical Financial Guardian, and we will petition the ministry on your behalf to remove him as your Magical Guardian. You will receive a secure Owl for the day of the hearing." Horik said.

"Thank you sir." Harry said as he bowed and left the room.

As he walked towards where Mr. Malfoy was waiting, Harry's mind was racing. So Dumbledore is my Magical Guardian. Why was he bothering to keep my finances a secret? What the hell is going on with the Headmaster?

"How was your meeting?" Lucius asked as Harry pulled up his hood.

"Informative. It appears the Dumbledore is my magical guardian. He was also stopping all my financial information from reaching me. I've asked the Goblins to petition for his removal because of that. I've given your name as a temporary Financial Guardian, I hope that is alright with you." Harry said as they left Gringotts.

Lucius Malfoy for his part was shocked. Dumbledore was Harry's Magical Guardian, and Harry was going to have him removed. This would be huge if it got out in the press. "I-I would be honored to serve as your temporary Guardian, Harry." Lucius said as they approached the entrance to Knockturn Alley.

Harry, Lucius, and Draco entered Knockturn Alley. Harry immediately used his shadow mage abilities to blend into his cloak while projecting his eyes his green eyes for everyone to see. Harry could hear Lucius trying to suppress a laugh as everyone started to avoid them as much as possible.

"I wish I shopped down here with you all the time." Lucius commented.

The three of them walked for about five minutes before they reached a store named "Timothy's Collectables." Lucius opened the door and Harry and Draco followed him inside.

"May I help you gentlemen?" The man behind the counter asked.

"Yes, you can show us the Elvin Silverware." Lucius said.

The man blinked once and then nodded his head. "If you gentlemen would follow me."

Harry and Draco followed Lucius into a back room. The shopkeeper turned to them and said, "Assemble."

Harry's eyes widened when there was a loud pop and at least a hundred house elves appeared.

Salazar stuck his head out of Harry's hood to get a closer look at the elves. Harry smirked at the terrified look the shopkeeper had once he saw Salazar.

"A-Are you l-looking for any particular kind of elf?" The man asked hesitantly.

"Such as?" Harry asked masking his true voice slightly.

"A c-cook, or a m-maid?" The man asked weakly.

"I'm looking for an elf who will serve me in all capacities as my personal elf." Harry said darkly.

All the elves did their best to make themselves look more presentable when they heard Harry was looking for a personal elf and not just a cook or housekeeper.

"I-I see. Well how long are you looking to keep the elf?" The man asked.

"A long time, I will not be purchasing a weak old elf." Harry said.

Several of the elder looking elves looked down and their ears fell at this. Harry was shocked at how pathetic they actually looked.

'Massster, may I inssspect thessse creaturesss. I will find one that isss worthy.' Salazar hissed.

'Yesss you may.' Harry hissed in return causing the shopkeeper to pale dramatically and the elves eyes to widen.

Harry lowered Salazar to the floor and his familiar began to slither in and out of all the elves while Harry walked around looking at all the elves and asking a few of them questions. Harry wanted to make sure his elf looked strong, or as strong as a house elf could look. The elf would be representing him, and he didn't want a sniveling little creature like Dobby if it was possible.

'Massster I have found one with ssstrong magic.' Salazar hissed.

Harry walked up over to his familiar. 'Where.' Harry hissed.

'Thissss elf.' Salazar said motioning to the elf who was in front of him.

"What can you tell me about this elf." Harry asked the shopkeeper.

"Er well she is rather new. I believe her previous master was the last of his family line, and when he died she was set free. It's very young I believe, and clearly a fine elf." The shopkeeper said growing bolder as he continued to speak.

"What is your name." Harry asked.

"Andi, Sir." The elf said proudly

Harry inspected the elf. She looked stronger then the other elves in the room, and she was a lot younger looking. The elf also held herself up with some shred of dignity.

"Do you have any talents?" Harry asked.

"I is sorry, sir, but I does not. I was the last elf of my previous master. Masters older elves all died before they could teach me." The elf said sadly, but still looking up at Harry.

'Are you certain about her potential?' Harry asked Salazar.

'Yesss, thisss elf hasss ssstrong magic in her.' Salazar said.

While Harry spoke to Salazar, Harry watch the little elf's reaction to his parseltongue. He was presently surprised to see that she did not show the slightest bit of fear. "What is the price for this elf." Harry asked.

"900 Gallions." The shopkeeper said.

Harry turned his head to the shopkeeper his eyes blazing under his hood. He bent down and picked up Salazar, never breaking eye contact with the shopkeeper.

"I-I-I meant 700 Gallions." The shopkeeper stuttered.

Salazar asked curiously about what the man was saying, but all the man heard and saw was Harry holding a very angry snake who was hissing like mad.

"F-F-Five Hundred Gallions, s-sir." The shopkeeper said weakly.

"I will pay three hundred and fifty Gallions." Harry said flatly.

The man was about to respond when Harry decided to answer Salazar's question. The shopkeeper's face paled dramatically at the parseltongue, and he nodded his head in agreement. "V-V-Very well, sir."

Harry took out his bottomless money pouch and said, "Three hundred and fifty Gallions."

Harry poured the coins out on the floor and the shopkeeper instructed a few elves to count it. When he was assured that it was all there, he gave Andi a sock freeing her of her bond to him.

"You will leave while we do the bond." Lucius told the man who was all too willing to leave the room.

When Harry was sure he was alone, he lowered his hood, and heard Draco howling with laughter.

"Merlin and I thought you were good at bargaining father." Draco said.

"Yes, well Harry seems to have the ability to naturally intimidate people. Now I believe we should do the bonding before the man gets curious." Lucius said.

"Very well what do I do?" Harry asked.

"You need to cut your palm and the palm of the elf, mix the blood, say your name, and that you bond the freed house elf Andi to your service." Lucius said handing Harry a small dagger..

Harry cut both his palm and the little elf's before saying, "I Harry James Potter bond the freed house elf Andi to my service." There

was a powerful wave of magic and when Harry looked down at the little house elf, he was surprised to see that she was now wearing a very elegant robe. He was further surprised to see the Potter crest appear over the left breast of the robe. The Black crest appeared over the right breast. The Slytherin crest appeared on the right shoulder, and the Morgan crest on the left shoulder.

"Well this is a surprise." Lucius commented.

"Merlin, Harry what did you do? Our elves don't look like that." Draco said in shock.

"Well I wanted Andi to look good as she would be representing me. I guess the magic just took care of the rest." Harry said.

"Master Harry is a most wonderful Master." Andi said happily inspecting her robes with tears in her eyes.

"I expect a lot from you Andi do not disappoint me." Harry said sternly.

Immediately, the elf straightened up. "I will not let master Harry down." Andi said.

"Good, now we will be shopping today. You will take my packages back to Malfoy Manor once they are bought is that understood?" Harry asked.

"Yes master, Harry." Andi said.

"Ready to go?" Harry asked as he shifted his appearance and raised his hood up.

"Yes." Lucius said.

The three of them left the room after Harry instructed Andi to charm the crest to not be seen. Harry told the little elf that she could show the Potter crest once they were out of Knockturn Alley, but not the others. They quickly made their way out of Knockturn Alley and entered Diagon Alley. When they entered Diagon Alley, Harry reverted to his normal form and lowered his hood.

"What time is it, Draco?" Harry asked.

"Ten O'clock. Your meeting at Gringotts sort of took a bit of time." Draco commented cheekily.

"Mr. Malfoy we are suppose to meet up with Tonks at the Leaky Cauldron at twelve. What do you want to do?" Harry asked.

"Well I suppose we could restock both of your Potions supplies at the apothecary." Lucius said.

Harry and Draco nodded and followed Lucius to a terribly smelly shop at the end of the Alley. When they stepped inside, they were shocked to see professor Snape at the counter.

"Severus!" Lucius said happily.

Snape looked up quickly and Harry swore that a smile flickered across his face. The smile lasted as long as it took for him to notice Harry standing next to Draco.

"Lucius, Draco, Mr. Potter. What brings you here today?" Snape asked.

"Ah well it is Harry's birthday and we are here to celebrate. We figured that we would do our school shopping though before hand and get it out of the way." Lucius said.

"Indeed, well happy birthday, Mr. Potter." Snape said with only the slightest bit of sarcasm.

"Now, now Severus. Be nice to Harry, I dare say he is nothing like James Potter. I mean surely you can see that. Would James Potter ever have been in Slytherin? Did he possess a single characteristic of the serpents?" Lucius asked.

Snape looked like he didn't want to be having this conversation, but none the less nodded his head in acceptance of that. "Yes, I dare say that you are correct, Lucius. Potter your father was an arrogant

bastard who lived to make my life miserable, but he didn't have a single characteristic of a Slytherin." Snape said clearly trying to get a rise out of Harry.

"Well I'm sorry to hear that, sir. I-I will always wish that I had the chance to meet my father, but I am sorry to hear that he treated you so poorly." Harry said trying to suppress his anger at the professor.

"Severus be nice to Harry, it's his birthday after all. You can curse James Potter every other day of the year." Lucius said with just a hint of a threat in his voice.

Snape clearly picked up on Lucius darkening tone. "You are of course correct, Lucius. Mr. Potter I apologize I should not have mocked your father on your birthday." Snape said.

"It's alright, sir. I don't imagine that I will ever be on speaking terms with the Weasleys. So I understand how you might resent my father." Harry said.

Snape nodded, "Well I take it both of you are here to pick up your potions supplies?"

"Yes, sir." Harry and Draco said together.

"Very good. I expect both of you to keep up the good work in Potions this year. Especially you Draco, you seem to have a knack for brewing." Snape said.

"Thank you uncle Severus, I'll keep up the good work." Draco said proudly.

"Good, I know you'll do Slytherin proud. Have you been practicing any Quidditch this summer, I have grown accustomed to seeing the trophy on my desk. The look on McGonagall's face whenever she sees it is priceless." Snape said with an honest grin.

"Yes, we were actually thinking about whether Harry should change positions." Draco said.

"Why? Mr. Potter is an excellent Seeker." Snape commented.

"Well Harry's best position isn't Seeker. He's a natural Chaser. We figured that since Flint graduated, if anyone shows any skill at seeker, Harry could join me as a chaser." Draco said.

"Ah well there is one problem with that, Draco. Mr. Flint did not graduate. He will be returning to Hogwarts to re-take his NEWTs." Snape said.

Draco and Harry's eyes rose slightly before Harry smacked his head. "Another year of Flint as Captain, Merlin help us."

Snape actually snickered at that, "Indeed. Well I must be off. Have a good birthday, Mr. Potter. Lucius, Draco a pleasure as always." Snape said as he gathered his ingredients and left the shop.

Harry and Draco quickly gathered their ingredients and paid six galleons and seven sickles for them. When they had paid, Harry had Andi take both his and Draco's purchases to Malfoy Manor. Before Andi left, Lucius gave the elf a small white orb that would allow her to pass through the wards.

When Andi returned, Lucius, Draco, and Harry had already left the apothecary. It was now eleven o'clock, and they were heading to Flourish and Blotts to get their school books. Draco took out the book list and whistled, "Looks like the new defense teacher is a real Lockhart fan."

Harry looked at his own book list and nodded. "Sure does. We have to buy six of Lockhart's books." Harry said.

"Clearly your defense teacher this year is an idiot then." Lucius commented.

"Huh?" Harry asked.

"Gilderoy Lockhart is a lying fool. He has not done a single thing that he claims he has in those books of his." Lucius commented.

"Really then I wonder why we have to buy them." Harry said.

"The man is very popular, especially among middle aged witches." Lucius commented.

"Doesn't mum have one of his book?" Draco asked.

"Unfortunately she was given How I Beat the Breckenridge Banshee as a Christmas present, and she refuses to get rid of it. I swear she keeps it just to bother me." Lucius said with a hint of humor.

When Harry, Draco, and Lucius got close to Flurish and Blots, they were shocked to see a large line waiting to get inside.

"What in Merlin's name is going on here?" Draco asked in shock.

"Lockhart." Lucius said in annoyance.

Harry looked at the sign next to the doorway of Flurish and Blots.

Gilderoy Lockhart will be signing copies of his autobiography:

Magical Me

From 10- 2pm on the 31st of July.

Harry just rolled his eyes. "I know that book. It came out of a Christmas popper I shared with Dumbledore at Hogwarts. The man looked like a complete idiot." Harry said.

"This line is ridiculous. Draco, Harry follow me." Lucius said as he walked past the large line and up to the entrance of the store. A teenage looking boy was standing there making sure that the crowd didn't try to storm inside.

"You, boy. Move out of my way." Lucius said with an air of authority.

The boy looked up at the regal looking Mr. Malfoy and gulped nervously. "I-I-I'm sorry, sir, but you will have to wait in line with everyone else. Mr. Lockhart is a busy man and..."

"I am not here to get a book signed by that pompous fool. Now you will move, or I will have you fired by this time tomorrow." Lucius said.

The boy again looked nervously at the large line. "I-I'm sorry, sir, b-but..."

"Do you know who I am." Lucius said dangerously.

"N-No, sir." The boy said weakly.

"I am Lucius Regins Malfoy. You will allow us to pass." Lucius snarled.

Harry noticed that the boy now looked like he wanted to do nothing more than to run away. To the boy's credit though, he stood his ground and said, "I-I-I'm sorry sir, but Mr. Flurish and Mrs. Blot were very clear when they said no one would be allowed to jump ahead in the..."

The door to the shop opened and a man wearing blue robes stepped out. "Michael send in the next group of..." The man stopped talking when he saw the enraged looking Lucius Malfoy.

"M...Mr....Malfoy a p-pleasure to see you again." The man said.

"Mr. Flurish is there a reason that your idiotic help refuses to allow me into the store?" Lucius demanded.

"I am terribly sorry, Mr. Malfoy. Brian is new here." Mr. Flurish said.

"I see, so clearly you will insure that this mistake is immediately corrected." Lucius said.

"Of course, right this way, Mr. Malfoy." Mr. Flurish said as he motioned for Mr. Malfoy to step into the shop.

Draco followed behind his father, but when Harry tried to follow, the man named Mr. Flurish grabbed his wrist. "Where do you think you're going? No sneaking in behind valued customers! Back of the line for you!" Mr. Flurish said sharply.

"Mr. Flurish you will unhand my son's friend. That is unless you wish for the entire Alley to know that you assaulted Harry Potter when he tried to enter your shop." Lucius said menacingly.

Harry saw Mr. Flurish's eyes widen when Lucius mentioned his name. Mr. Flurish removed his hand from so fast it was as though he was being burned. A gust of wind blew Harry's bangs exposing his lightning bolt scar causing Mr. Flurish to pale. "I-I-I-I'm terribly sorry, Mr. Potter. It was a foolish and stupid mistake of me. I should have recognized you immediately. Please your purchases today will be on me." Mr. Flurish stuttered out very quickly.

Harry just nodded his head and followed a smirking Draco and Mr. Malfoy into the store.

As soon as Harry entered the store, he heard someone say, "Harry?"

Harry and Draco turned to see Ginny Weasley standing in line with her brothers and mother. Clearly they were waiting to get some books signed by Lockhart. Harry and Draco shared a grin as they walked over to where she was standing.

"Hello Ginny, how are you?" Harry asked.

"Bugger off Potter." Ron said.

"Yea Potter..." George said.

"Leave Ginny..." Fred Continued.

"Alone." They said together.

Harry just smirked as Ginny stared daggers at them. "Mum I'm going to go talk to Harry away from these idiots." Ginny said.

Harry noticed Mrs. Weasley look pensive especially when she saw Draco. "V-Very well just don't go wandering in the Alley." Molly Weasley said.

Ginny just pulled Harry away from her brothers. Draco was doing his best to suppress his laughter as he followed them.

"Sorry about my brothers they're a bunch of arses." Ginny said apologetically.

"It's no problem, Ginny. By the way, this is my best friend Draco Malfoy. I don't think you got a chance to speak with him on the platform." Harry said gesturing to Draco.

Ginny hesitated for only a second before smiling and shaking Draco's hand. "Nice to meet you, I'm Ginny." Ginny said.

"Nice to meet you as well, Ginny. From what Harry tells me, there is hope for you not to end up like your moronic brothers." Draco drawled.

Ginny colored slightly. "Yes, well I hope I don't end up like them as well."

"Perhaps Slytherin is the house for you after all." Harry commented with a smile.

"Maybe, I just hope that I'm not in Gryffindor with them." Ginny said with annoyance.

Draco and Harry shared a slight smile. "That makes sense. So tell me what are you doing waiting in a line to get books signed by that fraud." Draco said gesturing to Lockhart.

Ginny gasped, "He's not a fraud! Is...is he, Harry?" Ginny asked in shock.

Harry smirked, "From what I've been told, he is a fraud. He's just a pretty face who is good at charming middle aged witches."

"I don't believe it, mum will be crushed." Ginny said.

"My stars is that Harry Potter!" A pompous voice cried out from across the room.

Harry, Draco, and Ginny all looked over to where the voice was coming from. Harry saw a man with bright purple robes grinning madly at him from behind a desk. Harry immediately recognized him. After all, his picture was hanging all over the blasted store. "Oh no." Harry said as Lockhart quickly started to walk towards him.

Ginny gasped slightly as Lockhart made his way over. "Mr. Potter, Gilderoy Lockhart come this way please." Lockhart said as he took Harry's arm and began to pull him near several photographers.

Lockhart looked like he was about to say something when Mr. Malfoy appeared at his side and pointed his wand at Lockhart's temple. "You will release my son's friend, Lockhart." Lucius said menacingly.

Lockhart immediately let Harry's wrist go. Harry noticed that Lockhart's knees actually started to quiver. Yep definitely a fraud.

Several men with cameras came over and were about to take a picture of Lucius with a wand to Lockhart's head. Before they could fire off a picture though, Lucius said, "If I see a picture of this or a story about this incident in the Prophet tomorrow not only will you be out of a job, but I will use every Knut I have to make sure you are living on the street by the end of the weekend." Lucius said.

Harry smirked as every single photographer lowered their camera and began looking at each other nervously. Once again Harry was very happy that he was friends with the Malfoys.

"Lucius..." Lockhart started.

"You are not my friend Lockhart therefore if you need to speak to me you will address me as Lord Malfoy." Lucius said darkly.

"Well I'm sorry for the misunderstanding Lord Malfoy. I was so excited to meet the legendary Harry Potter that I forgot myself." Lockhart said as Lucius removed his wand from his head.

Harry saw Lockhart noticeably relax when Lucius removed his wand.

"To apologize, I will be giving both Mr. Potter and your son Lord Malfoy my complete works free of charge." Lockhart said regaining his pompousness very quickly. Several people clapped causing Harry to just roll his eyes.

A moment later someone shoved a large amount of books towards Harry and Mr. Malfoy. Harry just accepted them and walked back towards Draco and Ginny.

"Well that was unexpectedly annoying." Harry said.

"Indeed." Lucius said as he dropped all the Lockhart books into a bag and handed it to Draco.

Harry just dumped all his books into Ginny's cauldron. "You take mine. Mr. Flurish already said all my books were to be paid for by him." Harry said.

"Harry, I-I-I can't accept this." Ginny said in shock.

"Don't worry about it. It's not like I would even bother to read those books anyway." Harry said.

As Ginny started to thank him profusely, Harry spotted Mr. Malfoy reach inside his robes and withdraw a small black book. While Ginny continued to thank him for the Lockhart books, Lucius dropped the black book inside her cauldron. Harry caught Lucius' eye, and the man smirked slightly.

Not wanting anything to ruin his plans for the youngest Weasley, Harry said, "Oh Ginny, I think I accidentally dropped another book into your cauldron when I gave you the Lockhart books."

Harry reached down into Ginny's cauldron and plucked out the little black book Mr. Malfoy had given her. "Got it." Harry said with a smile as he pocketed the black book.

Ginny talked with Harry and Draco while they picked up their books and paid for them. After they had paid for their books, Harry, Draco, Ginny, and Mr. Malfoy began walking towards the exit.

"Well I have to stay here." Ginny said in annoyance.

"What? Ginny it'll be fine; besides, your mum seems rather occupied with Lockhart." Harry said as he pointed to where Mrs. Weasley was gushing over the man.

Ginny just rolled her eyes. "I suppose I could sneak off for a little while."

Harry was about to say something when the door to the store opened and Harry's least favorite person in the world stepped into the shop with her parents.

"So they decided to let you come back did they Granger. Pity." Harry said with contempt

"Potter don't you ever get tired of hating me?" Granger asked.

"Why would he? There are just too many reasons to hate you after all." Draco commented darkly.

"I don't remember inviting you into this conversation Malfoy." Hermione barked.

"So this is the famous Hermione Granger." Lucius said with disdain.

"And who are you sir." Mr. Granger asked as he put a hand on Hermione's shoulder and stepped forward.

"I am Lord Malfoy, Draco's father." Lucius said.

"And he has an inflated sense of self-importance." A voice from behind called out.

Harry, Draco, and Lucius all turned around with a sneer on their face as Mr. Weasley stepped forward. "Hello Lucius surely you aren't bothering this poor girl. After all Ms. Granger was the top student this year at Hogwarts." Arthur Weasley said.

"I was simply introducing myself." Lucius commented darkly.

"Well maybe you should learn that no one asked you too." Mr. Weasley said menacingly.

"Daddy." Ginny said in shock at her father's rudeness.

"Ginny what are you doing here?" Mr. Weasley said only now realizing that his daughter was standing next to Draco.

"Oh I dare say she had the good sense to find some friends, who were worthy, Arthur." Lucius said with a smile.

"Ginny get over here right now." Mr. Weasley demanded.

"Dad you don't have to be so rude to Mr. Malfoy." Ginny huffed as she walked over by her father.

"You know, Arthur, it looks like you finally had a child who was brought up a proper pureblood. And to think it only took you what twelve tries?" Lucius said with a grin.

Mr. Weasley's face darkened. "Well at least I know now why you wanted to introduce yourself to Ms. Granger, Lucius. You wanted to meet the muggleborn girl who did better than your pureblooded son at school." Mr. Weasley said.

Lucius sneered, "You have a lot of nerve to talk, Weasley. My son and his closest friends were all in the top ten for their year. I don't recall seeing your son's name on the list."

Harry couldn't help but let a laugh slip out causing Mr. Weasley and the Grangers to glare at him. Deciding that it would be best to avoid a confrontation, Harry said, "Andi."

The regal looking elf appeared before him with a bow. "Yes master, Harry sir."

"What is that!" Hermione said in shock.

Harry just sneered at her. "That is my house elf, Granger. Andi, take Draco and my books back to the Manor." Harry said.

"Of course master Harry." Andi said as she and the packages disappeared.

"You could have said please." Hermione said once the elf had left.

"I could have." Harry agreed enjoying the look of outrage on Hermione's face.

"How much do you pay her to work?" Hermione asked darkly.

Draco and Lucius laughed, "Only a muggleborn would try to pay a house elf." Draco commented.

"You mean you don't pay her! She's some sort of slave!" Hermione said in shock.

"No she is a house elf." Harry said simply.

"You're a monster." Hermione said in outrage.

Harry just rolled his eyes, "Andi." He called.

The little elf appeared before him. "Yes master Harry?"

"This little mu...muggleborn wants to know if you would like to accept payment for your work? I will tell you right now if you request it I will pay you." Harry said hoping what Draco had told him about house elves was true.

Andi's eyes widened in horror. "Oh no! Andi would never accept payment from master Harry." Andi said strongly.

"But you deserve it." Hermione said strongly.

"Andi is a good elf. She will not ask for payment from master Harry." Andi said with contempt for the girl.

"Do you see Andi. Muggleborns just don't understand." Harry commented.

"Yes, master Harry is most right. She is a bad witch." Andi said shaking her finger at Hermione, who looked shocked at being called a bad witch by Harry's elf.

"Now see here. That is uncalled for, Mr. Potter, just because Ms. Granger had better marks then you doesn't mean that you have to insult her so." Mr. Weasley said.

Harry actually laughed heartedly at that causing everyone to stare at him. When he composed himself, he said, "Mr. Weasley I could care less if Granger is the top student. The fact is if I actually opened a book in history of magic, I probably could have been the top student. You see, Mr. Weasley, I prefer to focus on the courses that actually matter. You know Transfiguration, Charms, Defense against the Dark Arts, Potions, hell even Astronomy, and Herbology. I got O's in all those classes and was first in the year in three of them. Not every class Hogwarts teaches is important, Mr. Weasley. For instance did you know that there is a muggle studies class? I mean how could learning about muggles make me a better wizard? No self respecting witch or wizard would bother to take that class not when something like Ancient Runes or Arithmacy was available as an elective. Hell if you just wanted a couple of blow off classes, take Divination and Care of Magical Creatures at least those classes can help you in the magical world." Harry said.

"Now see here, Harry..."

"My name is Mr. Potter to you Mr. Weasley. I thought we had this conversation when you put me in St. Mungos." Harry said darkly. Salazar rose out of his robes and hissed at Mr. Weasley, who was clearly shocked to see a snake appear from under Harry's robes.

Harry smirked as he saw Mr. Weasley's face pale when Salazar started to hiss at him.

"Hi, Salazar." Ginny said as she extended a hand and pet the snake.

Harry was rather shocked to see Salazar actually move into Ginny's hand. He smirked slightly. He would have to ask Salazar when he changed his opinion on being pet.

"Arthur you are aware that this is the second time Mr. Potter has had to correct your poor manners." Lucius said with a smirk.

What happened next took everyone by shock. Mr. Weasley lunged at Mr. Malfoy and the two of them got into a fist fight on the floor.

"DADDY STOP IT!" Ginny shouted as several wizards rushed over to pull the two off of each other.

Harry noticed that Hermione was so shocked by the fight that she didn't notice her handbag was wide open at her side. Harry smirked as an idea popped into his head. He withdrew the little black book that Mr. Malfoy had tried to give to Ginny, and slipped it into Hermione's bag.

Several wizards pulled Mr. Malfoy and Mr. Weasley apart.

"Arthur what is the meaning of this." Mrs. Weasley said stepping forward from the assembled crowd.

"Sorry dear." Mr. Weasley said.

"Mr. Malfoy perhaps we should leave, we need to meet Tonks at twelve at the Leaky Cauldron." Harry put forth.

Lucius tore his eyes away from the now bleeding Mr. Weasley and turned to Harry. "Very well." He said shortly as he led Harry and Draco out of the store stopping only to sneer slightly at the Grangers.

When the Malfoys and Harry had left, a nervous Dan Granger looked at his daughter. "Are you sure you want to go back to that school?" He asked hoping his daughter would change her mind.

"I can't abandon what I am daddy. Besides, I'm good at magic. Even Potter told you I had talent." Hermione said weakly.

"I don't like that boy, Hermione. You really should stay away from him." Emma Granger said.

"Harry is...well I understand why Harry hates me mum." Hermione said as a slight stabbing pain shot through her chest.

"You do why?" Mr. Granger asked curiously.

Hermione was about to answer when the stabbing pain in her chest increased dramatically, and she fell to her knees trying to gasp for air.

"Hermione are you alright!" Mrs. Granger said in shock at her daughter.

"Oh my are you ok dear?" A large red headed woman asked leaning down to look at Hermione.

"I-I-I am ma'am. I-I think my magic was warning me." Hermione said gasping for air.

"What? What are you talking about?" Mr. Granger asked.

"Yes dear, what do you mean your magic was warning you?" Mrs. Weasley asked curiously.

"I made a witches oath not to say something and I was close to saying it." Hermione said.

Mrs. Weasley gasped. "Dear how old are you? Why would you make a witches oath?"

"What is a witches oath?" Mrs. Granger asked now very concerned.

"It's very serious and ancient magic. The person swears and oath and magic itself holds the person accountable for it. If someone breaks the oath they will be stripped of their magic before being killed most painfully. Also the families of oath breakers are generally looked down upon as it is a very shameful death." Mrs. Weasley explained.

"Hermione why would you do such a thing?" Mr. Granger asked now very irate.

"I-I can't tell you, Daddy. Know that I don't regret making it. It's helped me understand something." Hermione said as she stood up.

"Well dear I hope that you do not forget about your oath ever again. If you are going to dabble in magical contracts, you really do need to be careful. I'm Molly Weasley by the way." Mrs. Weasley said as she shook Mr. and Mrs. Granger's hands.

"Mum what's going on?" Ginny asked.

"Oh this girl was just feeling a little ill, Ginny." Mrs. Weasley said.

"Oh I hope you are better. I'm Ginny Weasley." Ginny said extending her hand.

"Hermione Granger." Hermione said.

Ginny instantly retracted her hand and glared at the girl. "I've heard of you." Ginny said.

Hermione was shocked at the girl's quick dark turn, but then remembered who her brothers were. "I assure you that whatever your brothers told you about me isn't true. Ron, Fred, and George aren't close friends of mine." Hermione said quickly.

"I don't believe a thing my idiotic brothers tell me. Harry's told me all I need to know about you." Ginny said narrowing her eyes.

"Harry? You mean Potter? How do you even know Potter you haven't even started Hogwarts yet?" Hermione asked.

"Ginny and Harry have been pen pals this summer." Mrs. Weasley said.

"Why? No offense Ginny, but Harry hates your brothers more then he hates me." Hermione asked curiously.

"I know that. Harry wanted me to know that he won't hold my brothers idiocy against me." Ginny said sharply.

"Oh...well I don't know what you've heard about me, but I'm not a bad person." Hermione said defending herself.

"Harry told me that you are a know it all who thinks that she's always right. He also told me that you were arrogant enough to think that you could stop a teacher from getting the Philosopher's Stone at the end of term." Ginny said firmly.

Hermione face darkened slightly, but then she blushed. "Well...I-er well I wouldn't call it arrogance. I just wanted to do what was right." Hermione said.

"I'm sure." Ginny drawled.

"Ginny. Apologize you're being terribly rude." Mrs. Weasley admonished.

"I'm not going to apologize mum." Ginny said.

"It's alright ma'am thank you for your help, but if Ginny is friends with Harry. Then I don't expect us to be very close to her, even if she is sorted into Gryffindor." Hermione said sadly.

Ginny just walked away and muttered, "I sure hope I don't end up in Gryffindor."

"I'm sorry about my daughter. It seems like our entire family has been rather torn this summer over the topic of Mr. Potter." Mrs. Weasley said sadly.

"Yes. We had the pleasure of meeting the boy at Hogwarts. He was rather rude to us." Dan Granger said.

"Really? He was such a polite young man when I met him earlier this summer." Mrs. Weasley said shocked.

"Dan is exaggerating. The boy was clearly recovering from injuries and was rather blunt with some of his points. I wouldn't call him rude, but he was certainly direct." Mrs. Granger said hesitantly.

"I see." Mrs. Weasley said.

"Well we had better get your books, Hermione." Mr. Granger said.

"It was nice to meet you Mrs. Weasley." Hermione said politely as she and her parents moved past the woman.

Leakey Cauldron, Diagon Alley

Harry, Draco, and Lucius all entered the Leakey cauldron at exactly 12 O'clock. Lucius went over to the bar where a toothless man was standing, and Harry spotted Tonks sitting in the corner of the pub by herself. Harry tapped Draco on the shoulder and pointed her out. The two of them quickly made their way over to where she was sitting.

When Tonks saw Harry and Draco, she smiled, got up, and gave both of them hugs.

"It's great to see you two. What have you been up too the last two weeks?" Tonks asked curiously.

"A lot of Quidditch." They said together causing Tonks to laugh.

"How was France?" Harry asked.

"Horrible, Mum and I fought for the entire trip. We still aren't speaking. The only reason I'm here is because I used our floo and snuck out after she had to go to work." Tonks said sadly.

"I'm sorry." Harry said honestly.

"It's not your fault. She's just being ridiculously stupid." Tonks said.

"I've obtained a private room." Lucius said striding over.

"Hi, uncle Lucius." Tonks said brightly.

"Hello Tonks. I'm sorry to hear that you were unable to come to the manor with Harry." Lucius said.

"Yea, me too." Tonks said as they followed Lucius into a back room.

The private room was very simple. It consisted of a single table with several chairs around it. A pitcher of pumpkin juice was in the middle of the table.

"So what have you been up to today?" Tonks asked.

Harry quickly launched into an explanation about what Dumbledore had done to his Gringotts account, and how he had kept his financial information from him.

Tonks was shocked to hear that the Headmaster had done such a thing, and by the end of the story, she was as angry as Harry.

"That's terrible. I can't believe Dumbledore would do such a thing!" Tonks said.

"I know. Hopefully I'll be able to remove him as my Magical Guardian." Harry said.

"So besides finding out the headmaster is a bastard, what else have you done today?" Tonks asked.

Harry actually grinned. "Andi." Harry called out.

The little elf appeared with a Pop of displaced air

"How may Andi help you master Harry?" The elf asked.

"Tonks this is Andi. Andi this is Tonks." Harry said smiling.

"Blimmy you got your own house elf, Harry. I heard those were incredibly expensive. Her robes are really amazing as well. Dobby just wore that ridiculous pillow case." Tonks said.

"Well she wasn't as expensive as you'd think. It turns out the shop own was rather frightened of me, so I got a good deal." Harry said with a smirk.

"Oh Harry, what did you do to the poor man?" Tonks asked with a grin.

"Nothing much, just a little Parseltongue while using some of my Shadow Mage talents. I actually think it was Salazar who scared him most of all." Harry said as he laid his familiar on the table.

'By the way, sssince when do you like being pet, Sssalazar?' Harry asked.

'I do not. I am no dog.' Salazar replied indignity.

'You are lying. You liked it when Ginny pet you in the sssshop.' Harry hissed.

'Fine, I enjoy it, but I am still no dog. If the rabbitsss try it, they will be bit immediately.' Salazar hissed.

Harry actually laughed out loud and rubbed Salazar's head causing his familiar to hiss in approval.

"What was that about?" Tonks asked.

"Oh it's nothing. Draco, Lucius just never try to pet Salazar." Harry said as he continued to stroke his familiar.

"What about Tonks?" Draco asked indignity.

"Salazar didn't mention her." Harry replied cheekily.

"So what are you going to do with Andi once you go back to Hogwarts?" Tonks asked.

"Ah yes well I guess this as good of a time to tell you, Andi. When I return to Hogwarts, you will learn from the house elves in the castle. You said that your former master's elves all died before they could

teach you anything, this will let you learn how to cook and such.” Harry said.

”Master Harry would let Andi learn from Hogwartz’ elves?” Andi asked in shock.

”Yes, but should I need anything, you will drop whatever you are doing and see to it. Is that understood?” Harry asked.

”Oh yes Master Harry. Andi is a good house elf; Andi would never put any other work ahead of serving you.” Andi said quickly

”Good. Well that’s all Andi, you may return to the manor for now.” Harry said dismissing the elf.

Andi bowed and disappeared.

”She seems like a really good elf, Harry. I love how her robes have the Potter family crest on it.” Tonks commented.

”Oh the robes actually have all four of my family crests on it. I just instructed her to hide the other three for right now.” Harry said.

”That reminds me time for you to open your birthday present!” Tonks said excitedly.

Harry grinned at his best friends smile. ”Ok let’s see it.” Harry said with a smile.

Tonks took out a wrapped parcel and handed it to Harry.

Harry took the gift and tore off the wrapping exposing a simple brown box. He removed the cover of the box and inside was a Silver robe. Harry touched the robe and was amazed at how incredibly soft it felt. It was like touching his invisibility cloak. He removed the silver robe from the box and gasped along with Draco and Lucius. The crest of the Morgan family was stitched in gold on the back of the robe. ”Tonks, I can’t accept this. This must have cost you a fortune to buy.” Harry said in shock.

"No Harry take it. It's your family after all." Tonks said with a smile.

Lucius felt the robe and gasped. "This feels like arcumantula silk. Tonks this must have cost you several hundred Gallions to have made. The craftsmanship is exquisite, and the crest is done expertly." Lucius commented.

"Um well...you see...don't be mad at me ok Harry, but I er didn't buy it." Tonks admitted.

"I don't understand how did you get it?" Harry asked.

"Er well, you see my mum and I went on a muggle tour of the Bastille, you know that really famous French prison. Well we were in this section of the tour where they showed the formal robes that were confiscated during the ensuing revolution. I instantly noticed the Morgan Crest on the back of one of them. I don't know, but I think your ancestors home must have been raided or something because they were in the same section with other French aristocratic families." Tonks said.

"Ok...well that explains where you found it, but how did you manage to get the robe Tonks?" Harry asked again.

"Er well I sort of took my mum's wand later that day and went back to the Bastille under your invisibility cloak. I snuck in with the last tour group, and went to the room where the robes were. I sent a few simple spells into the room to short out any electric security cameras, and then I just sort of walked over and took it. Y-You aren't mad at me are you?" Tonks asked hesitantly.

Harry, Draco, and Lucius were just staring at Tonks in shock. After a good minute of not saying a word, Draco broke the silence. "How were you not a Slytherin, Tonks." He asked.

That seemed to snap Harry and Lucius out of their shock.

"Tonks that was brilliant!" Harry said as he brought her into a hug.

"You aren't mad at me?" Tonks asked again.

"Mad? My family robes were in some Muggle exhibit. I'm so glad you got them for me." Harry said.

"I'm so glad. I was so worried that you would be angry with me for stealing them." Tonks admitted.

"I could care less about you returning them too me, Tonks. I mean please don't ever do something like that again. You could have gotten in so much trouble, but the gift is brilliant." Harry said.

"Indeed. I would definitely suggest that you not do something like that ever again, Tonks; however, I must complement your Slytheriness." Lucius said with a grin.

"Slytheriness? Did you just make that up father?" Draco asked with a grin.

"So what if I did. It perfectly describes Tonks' actions." Lucius said with a grin.

"Well I don't know if our gift will be able to top Tonks', but here it is." Draco said as he handed a package to Harry.

Harry opened the gift, but was rather confused by what was inside. The Malfoys seemed to have gotten him four very tiny black objects.

"Oh, I'm sorry, Harry, I forgot the shrinking spell." Lucius said as he tapped each of the objects with his wand.

Harry watched as the each of the objects grew into four very thick books. Harry curiously looked at the titles. He gasped as he saw The Big Book of Transfiguration. He quickly looked at the others. Lucius had gotten him 1001 Charms to Curse Your Enemies by Filius Flitwick, and Defensive Transfiguration by Albus Dumbledore.

"Thank you sir. I wasn't aware that professor Flitwick wrote a book. I would have thought he would have told me about it." Harry said.

"Harry, professor Flitwick was a five time dueling champion in his youth. His book is a restricted buy meaning that the Ministry monitors everyone who purchases it. In fact, all of these books are restricted.. Do not show anyone these books to anyone, Harry. As soon as you are done reading them, lock them securely in your trunk. If the right people found you with these, it would raise some uncomfortable question." Lucius said.

"I'll be very careful with them, sir. Thank you very much for them. I'm sure they will all help me a lot in my quest for a mastery." Harry said.

"Harry I didn't get you these books to help you get a mastery." Lucius said.

"I don't understand?" Harry asked

"You see Harry a lot of masters in Charms and Transfiguration can do amazing things, but they are utterly useless when trying to defend themselves. I doubt that McGonagall and Flitwick will take the time to teach you curses, hexes, and jinxes that their field can offer. This is a huge mistake on their part. With your name, Harry; a lot of people look to you as an icon. Some of them might not be your friends. It is important for you to learn offensive and defensive magic to defend yourself from people who might want to harm you." Lucius said strongly.

Harry felt himself pale. He had never thought that someone might try to make a name for themselves by hurting him. "I-I will read them then, sir." Harry said.

"Good, now don't try to do any of the advanced spells, Harry. You would do better to just learn the theory behind the spells for right now. Your magic simply isn't mature or advanced enough to do most of the spells. Is that clear?" Lucius said strictly.

"Yes, sir." Harry said.

"Good." Lucius said with a bit of relief on his face.

Harry thanked the Malfoy's for their gift and they proceeded to eat their meal in the Leaky Cauldron. When they finished, they paid the bill, and departed the private room. Harry was again thanking Tonks for her gift when he heard a rather familiar voice scream out, "NYMPHADORA GAMMA ORIONIS TONKS!"

Harry was about to burst out laughing at Tonks' full name; however, the site of an irate looking Andromeda Tonks took the grin right off his face.

"What are you doing here young lady?" Andromeda said sharply.

"I-I'm here for Harry's birthday." Tonks said weakly.

"And you took it upon yourself to sneak out and come all the way to London without any supervision? I thought you had more sense Nymphadora!" Andromeda admonished as several people began to take notice of the increasingly irate Mrs. Tonks.

"Your daughter wasn't unsupervised Andromeda. I was here." Lucius said coming down the stairs with Draco.

Harry had never been as frightened of Mrs. Tonks as he was at that moment. She looked like she was about to kill Lucius.

"Nymphadora use the floo and go home immediately." Mrs. Tonks said icily.

"B-B-But it's Harry's birthday mum and we were going to go..." Tonks said.

"Nymphadora you will floo home now!" Andromeda yelled causing Tonks, Harry, and Draco to take a step away from the enraged Mrs. Tonks. Harry was rather impressed that Lucius seemed to be holding his ground.

"Perhaps it would be best if you listened to your mother, dear." Lucius said.

Harry could practically feel Mrs. Tonks' hatred as she glared at Lucius.

Tonks just nodded her head.

"I'm sorry I can't stay long, Harry. Have a happy birthday though." Tonks said as she pulled Harry into a hug.

"Don't worry about it, Tonks. You being here made it great. I can't thank you enough for your gift, and I'll write to you as soon as I get back. Andi will deliver the letter to you." Harry said.

They separated and Harry could see that Tonks was close to tears. He leaned in and said, "Really Tonks, it's ok. I don't want you to get in anymore trouble by arguing with your mum."

Tonks just nodded her head and left without another word although she did send her mother a very dark glare as she passed her. Andromeda though didn't notice as she was just staring daggers at Lucius.

After Tonks had used the floo to leave, Andromeda started in on Lucius. "How dare you encourage my daughter to deceive me!" Andromeda said menacingly.

"I assure you Andromeda I did nothing to encourage your daughter's deception of you. The fact is Harry informed her that we would be in Diagon Alley today for his birthday, and she arrived to celebrate it with him. If you had simply allowed her to accept the invitation to Malfoy Manor, none of this would have happened." Lucius said.

"How dare you tell me that this is my fault! You manipulated my daughter into sneaking out of her home in the middle of the day." Andromeda said harshly.

"I beg to differ. The girl simply asked what Harry's plans were for his birthday. He wrote back with what we were planning on doing, and she replied that she would join us. It was her decision, and what was so bad about it? She wanted to celebrate a friend's birthday, Andromeda. You are acting irrational. It's not like she wasn't supervised, I was here the entire time." Lucius said.

Harry noticed that Andromeda looked ready to whip out her wand and hex Lucius where he stood. "My daughter doesn't need to be exposed to people like you and your son, Lucius." Andromeda hissed.

Draco narrowed his eyes at his Aunt's insult and Harry felt that Andromeda was now stepping over the line.

"You will not insult my son, Andromeda. I would also like to remind you that my son is one of your daughter's best friends." Lucius hissed darkly.

"My Nymphadora has clearly been brainwashed. You and Cissy couldn't have a son that was anything less than a dark wizard who praises blood purity." Andromeda said.

"This is your last warning Andromeda. You will not insult the Malfoy name. I would have thought you would have learned by now that your insults have consequences. After all the last time you insult a notable pureblood family, you were disowned weren't you?" Lucius said menacingly.

"How dare you." Andromeda said drawing her wand.

Lucius was just as quick and drew his own wand.

Several wizards who were standing nearby began ducking behind their tables.

"Ok...let's just all calm down and put our wands down. After all, we wouldn't want to get into a fight in such a narrow area. I mean a stray spell could hit someone you didn't want it too." Harry said stepping between the two.

"Yea like me." Draco said.

Harry watched as both Lucius and Andromeda reluctantly lowered their wands.

"Harry you are coming back with me." Mrs. Tonks said shifting her gaze from Lucius.

"Er sorry ma'am, but I'm staying at Malfoy Manor." Harry said.

"Harry you should not stay with that trash. They are only your friends because of your fame. Trust me they don't care for mixed bloods." Andromeda said.

Harry decided that it wouldn't be all that wise to tell someone who talked to Dumbledore that he was a pureblood. "Regardless of their stance on blood purity, Draco is my friend." Harry said.

Mrs. Tonks looked very angry at his refusal to come with her. "Fine, but Lucius and his scion will only lead you down the path of a dark wizard Harry Potter!" Andromeda said sharply as she strode over to the floo and departed.

"Well that was fun." Harry commented dryly as they left the Leaky Cauldron.

"Andromeda always had a knack at showing up when she wasn't wanted." Lucius said darkly.

Harry was about to ask exactly what Lucius meant, but Draco interrupted his question.

"Father can we go to the Quidditch store?" Draco begged.

Lucius just rolled his eyes. "Very well Draco, but don't expect to buy anything."

Draco nodded his head as he pulled Harry into the store. Once they were inside, Harry groaned.

"The feelings mutual, Potter." Fred Weasley said darkly.

"Leave Harry alone." Ginny said.

"Ginny stop taking the dark wizards side, we're your family." Ron said.

"So that means you can't be an idiot!" Ginny said sharply.

Draco snickered and Harry laughed outright at the shocked look on Ron's face.

"What do you want anyway, Potter, here for more free handouts?" George asked.

"Yea, we all saw all the free stuff you and Malfoy got from Lockhart. Don't expect to get the same attention everywhere you go, Potter." Fred said menacingly.

"What are you doing here, Weasley? Can you even afford these brooms?" Draco asked.

Harry noticed all the Weasley's colored slightly including Ginny.

"Fine I'll just leave. Draco you can look around for a little and I'll meet you at Madam Malkins for our robes in twenty minutes or so." Harry said as he turned to leave.

"Harry just stay you don't honestly care what the Weasleys think do you?" Draco asked in shock.

"Nah, I'd just rather not put up with them after what happened with Tonks' mum." Harry said as an idea popped into his head. "Hey Ginny want to check out some other stores?"

Ginny's eyes widened at being asked to hang out with the famous Harry Potter.

"She isn't going anywhere with you Potter." Ron snarled.

"Bugger off Ron, I'd love to." Ginny said as she walked over to Harry.

"Ginny, mum said to stay with us. You'll get in trouble!" Percy said sharply.

"I don't care. I'd rather be grounded then have to listen to you all the rest of the summer." Ginny huffed as she left the store with Harry smirking madly behind her.

"So where do you want to go?" Harry asked.

"Er...um...well...wherever you do." Ginny said shyly.

"Oh come on Ginny, we've written each other all summer surely you can talk normally with me." Harry commented flashing a smile.

Ginny blushed, "I'm sorry...it's just that...well you're like this big hero."

Harry actually laughed causing Ginny to blush further. "I'm sorry Ginny don't be embarrassed. I just really don't see myself as a hero. Everyone seems to have all these fancy titles for me. I just think it is silly, I'm just Harry."

Ginny's blush faded slightly. "Yeah right, Harry Potter also known as the boy who lived, hero of the wizarding world, and slayer of the dark lord." Ginny said.

"Was that some sarcasm I detected, Ginny? You know that's a usually the first sign of a true Slytherin." Harry said with a smile.

Ginny just grinned at that.

"So what left do you have to get for school?" Harry asked.

"Oh well I'll get everything later with my parents." Ginny said her blush coming back now very quickly.

"Oh forget that, do you have your wand yet?" Harry asked.

Ginny mumbled something under her breath that Harry couldn't hear.

"What was that?" Harry asked curiously.

"I said that I've got my aunt's old wand already." Ginny said as she colored profusely.

"What? But you need your own wand. Ollivander said you won't have the best results with another person's wand." Harry said.

"Well...er...my family...um well...we don't exactly have enough money to get me a new one." Ginny said clearly embarrassed.

"Oh, well I kind of put my foot in it didn't I?" Harry said.

"Don't worry about it, Harry. I bet running around with Draco kind of makes you forget about stuff like that." Ginny said honestly.

"No, I made an arse of myself. How about I take you to Ollivander's and buy you a wand to make up for it." Harry said.

Ginny was floored. "H-Harry I-I couldn't let you do that. Wands are really expensive."

Harry just waved her off. "Don't worry about it. My trust vault was just collecting interest for twelve years, Ginny, believe me I've got plenty of money."

"Still I can't accept that Harry." Ginny said.

"When's your birthday?" Harry asked.

"Er...August 12th." Ginny said distracted.

"Well then it'll be an early birthday present." Harry said as he led them towards Ollivander's.

"Harry really it's ok you don't have to get me anything, especially a wand." Ginny said again as they reached the shop.

"Ginny it's a present. It's the least I can do." Harry said as he opened the door for Ginny.

Ginny reluctantly stepped inside and Harry followed.

"Ah Mr. Potter back so soon? Tell me how is that amazing wand of yours?" Mr. Ollivander asked.

"It's excellent sir." Harry said with a smile.

"Glad to hear it, now who do we have here? If the hair is any indication, I'd say you are a Weasley." Mr. Ollivander said with a smile.

"Yes, sir, I'm Ginny Weasley." Ginny said with a bright smile.

"Ah well I'm very pleased to meet your acquaintance. I haven't seen a Weasley since your twin brothers came in here a few years back." Mr. Ollivander said.

Harry mentally filed away that Ron was clearly using someone else's wand.

"Well Ms. Weasley are you left or right handed?" Mr. Ollivander asked.

"Right." Ginny said reluctantly.

Immediately tape measures began to measure her arm and every other part of her. When they were finished, Mr. Ollivander came back with several boxes.

"Try this one. Yew with Dragon heart strings, 12 and half inches." Mr. Ollivander said.

Ginny gave the wand a wave, but Mr. Ollivander snatched it away.

No, no, no. Try this one, Maple, Unicorn hair, ten and three quarters." Mr. Ollivander said.

Again Mr. Ollivander snatched the wand away. He proceeded to give five more wands to Ginny before he said, "Oak with a Phoenix feather, twelve inches."

Ginny smiled slightly and flicked the wand. Harry grinned as several green sparks shot out of it.

"Oh Bravo. It looks like we have a match, dear." Mr. Ollivander said.

"Mr. Ollivander just so Ginny knows what are your return policies?" Harry asked.

"Return Policies? Mr. Potter once a wand chooses a witch or wizard the wand can not be returned." Mr. Ollivander said indignity.

"Thank you." Harry said as he paid ten Gallions for Ginny's wand.

They left the store with Ginny gushing her thanks again and again.

"Ginny it really was nothing, Happy Birthday." Harry said.

"Well when is your birthday? I'll have to get you something as a thank you." Ginny asked.

Harry smirked. "July 31st." He replied.

Ginny's face was in shock, "But that's today!"

"Yep." Harry said with a grin.

"H-Happy Birthday!" Ginny said as she gave him a hug.

"Thank you Ginny." Harry said.

"So I guess it's a little late to get you a present, huh?" Ginny said.

"Don't worry about it. In fact I have another gift for you." Harry said with a grin.

"Really Harry the wand was more than enough." Ginny said emphatically.

"Oh don't worry this is free. I just thought that you would like to know that they don't place the tracking charms on your wand until you get to Hogwarts. So basically you've got one month to study and practice to get ahead of your classmates." Harry said with a grin.

Ginny's mouth just dropped. "Are you serious?" Ginny asked in shock.

"One hundred percent, Draco and I did it last summer." Harry said with a smile.

Ginny just smiled brightly up at Harry as they made their way back to the Quidditch shop. They were about to enter when the door opened and an irate looking Molly Weasley came out of the shop.

"Ginerva Weasley! How dare you leave your brothers and go wandering about the Alley." Mrs. Weasley said sharply.

"I'm afraid that was my fault, Mrs. Weasley. I asked Ginny to come along when Ron and the Twins made it clear that they didn't want me in the Quidditch shop with them." Harry replied.

Mrs. Weasley immediately softened her voice. "Oh Harry, I'm sorry for whatever they might have said to make you leave, but Ginny knew that she was to stay with her brothers." Mrs. Weasley said.

"One of them could have come with me, mum. They just insulted Harry and let us leave." Ginny said in her defense.

Mrs. Weasley again looked back into the shop where the twins and Ron were. Harry noticed that when she glared at them, their smirks disappeared, and Ron quickly exited the shop.

"Mum whatever Potter just said is a lie." Ron said.

"So you didn't insult him and make him leave the Quidditch shop?" She asked.

"I didn't make him leave." Ron said defensively.

"Hush Ronald. Also could not one of you tag along with your sister when she left with him? What if she had gotten hurt?" Mrs. Weasley said.

"Well then we would have known who did it and beaten the crap outa Potter." Ron said.

Harry's eyes darkened and Salazar rose up out of his robes. "I'd like to see you try to beat me up and survive, Weasley." Harry said darkly as Salazar hissed menacingly.

"He is such an evil wizard why can't you see it Ginny!" Ron shouted.

"Ronald be quiet. Ginny I'm sorry, but you should have stayed with your brothers. You will be grounded for the rest of the summer." Mrs. Weasley said.

"But mum..." Ginny said.

"That's what you get for hanging out with Slytherin trash like Potter." Ron commented airily.

"Shut up." Ginny said as she pointed her new wand at Ron.

"Ginny where did you get that wand?" Mrs. Weasley asked in shock.

Ginny immediately blushed, and Harry decided to step into the conversation.

"I bought it for her ma'am. I sort of put my foot in my mouth and embarrassed her on accident. To make it up, I took her to Ollivander's and bought her wand for her birthday." Harry said.

"Harry, really that is very nice of you, but really a wand is very expensive she should know that she can't accept that kind of thing." Mrs. Weasley said.

"It was a birthday gift ma'am. Besides, Mr. Ollivander doesn't accept returns, so she is stuck with the wand." Harry said.

Mrs. Weasley looked hesitantly towards her daughter. She knew of Mr. Ollivander's no return policy, and unless she wanted to snap her daughter's new wand, Ginny would have to keep it. "V-very well, Harry. Ginny I hope you thanked..."

"Mum you can't let Ginny keep that! It's bloody charity!" Ron yelled causing several people to stare at him.

"It was a birthday gift, Weasley." Harry said with a smirk.

"Ronald, Mr. Ollivander does not accept returns, and since I will not be snapping your sister's wand, she will have to keep it." Mrs. Weasley said.

"You might not be willing to snap it, but I won't let my sister be in Potter's debt!" Ron said as he grabbed Ginny's wand from her, and put it between his two hands.

Realizing what the idiotic Weasley was going to do, Harry immediately shouted, "Expelliarmus!" The disarming spell hit Ron before he was able to snap the wand and flung him into the Quidditch shop. Harry caught the wand in his free hand and gave it to Ginny.

"Y-You just did magic!" Ginny said in horror.

"Well I wasn't about to let your idiotic brother ruin your birthday gift." Harry said shaking his head as he realized what he had just done.

"Mr. Potter, I-I-I don't know what to say." Mrs. Weasley said in shock.

Harry was about to tell her exactly how stupid her son was when a brown Owl landed right in front of him. Sighing, Harry took the letter with the Ministry emblem on it.

Dear Mr. Harry Potter

Today at 2:15 pm. The ministry tracking charm on your wand found that you performed the disarming charm in Diagon Alley. Since you have no previous record for underage magic, this is a warning to not do any further magic during the summer until you have reached your sixteenth birthday.

Department of Underage Magic

Ministry of Magic

Harry sighed, "Since it's my first offense it's just a warning. Ginny I'd suggest keeping that wand away from your idiotic brothers when you get home." Harry said.

"Ha getting expelled Potter!" Ron yelled as he came out of the store.

"RONALD BILIUS WEASLEY YOU WILL APOLOGIZE TO HARRY THIS INSTANT!" Mrs. Weasley shouted.

"But mum he cursed me!" Ron yelled.

"Because you were going to snap your sister's new wand! Now apologize this instant or you will be grounded for the summer and Christmas vacation!" Mrs. Weasley said.

"I'm sorry." Ron gruffed.

"It's fine, Mrs. Weasley. I doubt the ministry would expel me. After all I'm what were my titles again, Ginny? Ah yes the famous Harry Potter, the boy who lived, hero of the wizarding world, and slayer of the dark lord." Harry said as Ginny giggled.

"Well at least you know them all now." Ginny said with a smile.

"As fun as this has been, Ginny, I really do have to go meet up with Draco and Mr. Malfoy to get measured for my robes. Remember to write me." Harry said as he left the group of redheads.

"I can't believe that Ginny has her own wand and I don't." Ron said as soon as Harry was out of earshot.

"What's this Gin-Gin has her own wand?" Fred asked as the other three Weasley brothers exited the Quidditch shop.

"Yes, Harry bought it for her birthday." Mrs. Weasley said glaring at the boys.

"Mother I can't believe you allowed Potter to do that especially after he cursed Ron." Percy said.

"The only reason Harry cursed the idiot was because he tried to snap my wand." Ginny said sharply.

"You what!" Fred, George, and Percy yelled at Ron.

"What it was a gift from Potter. She was better off without it." Ron huffed.

"You would actually snap you own sister's wand?" Fred asked in shock.

"You do realize that's the biggest insult you can do to some." George said.

"Yea to Potter for thinking he can buy our family." Ron said.

"No Ronald. The insult is to the person who the wand belongs as it is the wand who chooses the witch or wizard. You'd basically be saying your sister wasn't worthy of doing magic." Percy said.

"Clearly the sorting hat..." George said.

"Never considered him for Ravenclaw." Fred finished.

"Shut it. I still say Ginny should snap it herself then." Ron said.

"Stop being such a jealous git, Ron." Ginny barked.

"I'm not being jealous, Ginny. Potter is just bad news. You should be careful around him." Ron said.

Ginny just rolled her eyes and put her new wand securely into her robe pocket.

Madam Malkins, Diagon Alley

Harry entered Madam Malkins and spotted Mr. Malfoy.

"Hello, Mr. Malfoy." Harry said walking over.

"Ah Harry I was about to go look for you. Where did you and young Ms. Weasley go?" Lucius asked.

"Oh I bought her a wand. Then I got a warning for using magic when her idiotic brother tried to snap it." Harry said with annoyance.

"You did magic! Harry, why would you even bother buying a Weasley a wand anyway?" Lucius asked

Harry smirked. "Don't worry the ministry just sent me a warning, and the look on all the male Weasleys' faces when their sister is sorted into Slytherin will be priceless." Harry said with a grin.

"You really think she'll be a Slytherin?" Lucius asked in shock.

"Oh young Ginny is seriously at odds with her family right now. She wants nothing to do with them, and I think I've convinced her that Slytherin is the house for her." Harry said proudly.

Lucius grinned. "Well you'll have to write me if she is sorted into Slytherin. If she is, I'll have to pay Arthur a visit for actually having one decent child. Now you had best get fitted for your new robes."

Harry nodded and joined Draco in the fitting room. Thirty minutes later, the three of them departed Madam Malkins, and Harry had Andi take their clothes back to the manor.

"Well I suppose that is everything." Lucius said as he took out the portkey.

Harry and Draco reached out and touched it.

"Activate." Lucius said tapping his wand against it. A moment later the three of them felt a pull behind the navel as they were taking back to Malfoy Manor.

The three of them landed softly in the living room.

"HAPPY BIRTHDAY HARRY!"

Harry's eyes widened when he saw Blaise, Susan, and Hannah all standing in front of him with huge grins on their faces.

"What is this?" Harry asked in shock.

"Well it sure isn't your surprise party, Potter." Blaise said sarcastically.

Harry's face broke into a huge grin.

"Happy birthday, Harry." Narcissa said.

"This is why you didn't come to Diagon Alley?" Harry said in shock.

"Yes well it took some time convincing Amelia to bring the kids over from the beach for the day." Narcissa said with a smile.

"I'd like to think I'm not that difficult." Madam Bones said walking forward with two other women.

"Of course not Amelia." Narcissa said sarcastically.

"Sarcastic Slytherins." Amelia muttered.

"Hey I'm a Slytherin." Harry protested along with Draco and Blaise.

"Well it's not like it isn't true you three. Happy birthday by the way, Mr. Potter." Madam Bones said.

"Thank you and please call me Harry, ma'am." Harry said.

"Very well Harry. May I introduce Amanda Zabbini and Michele Abbott." Madam Bones said pointing to the two women with her.

"It's nice to meet you Miss Zabbini." Harry said.

"You also, Mr. Potter. Blaise has told me nothing but good things about you and Mr. Malfoy." Mrs. Zabbini said as she shook Harry's hand.

"Hello, Mrs. Abbott. Mrs. Tonks mentioned that you two were in Ravenclaw together when she was in school." Harry said extending his hand to rather intimidated looking woman.

Harry noticed Mrs. Abbott seemed too noticeable relax with the mention of Mrs. Tonks. "You know Andi?" Mrs. Abbott asked as she shook Harry's hand.

"Yes, her daughter and I are best friends." Harry said.

"I haven't seen Andi in ages, Mr. Potter. If you see her, please say hello for me." Mrs. Abbott said with a smile.

"I will ma'am." Harry said politely.

"Come on Harry we didn't come here for you to talk with our mums. Open your presents!" Hannah said excitedly.

Harry smiled and followed Hannah to a table where two wrapped gifts were sitting.

"You know you didn't have to get me anything." Harry said honestly.

"You are so much fun, Potter." Blaise said rolling his eyes.

Harry playfully shoved Blaise before he opened the first present. He took out a book entitled Quidditch through the Ages.

"Oh that's from me do you like it?" Hannah asked.

Harry grinned. "It's brilliant thanks Hannah." Harry said with a smile.

"Yea well I figured if you had that you might not have to spy on us puffs to beat us this year." Hannah said cheekily.

"Are you kidding me? If Diggory is made Captain, I'll have no choice but to spy on you." Harry said with a grin.

"Blaise and I went in on our gift together." Susan said as she pushed the small package towards Harry.

Harry smiled and opened Susan and Blaise's gift. Once the wrapping was gone, Harry saw that it was a small wooden box. Harry tentatively opened the lid and gasped. Inside the box was a Golden Snitch that was struggling to get out of the bindings holding it in place. He was able to read the words "Happy Birthday Harry" engraved on the ball.

"Thanks guys this is awesome." Harry said as he made to undo the bindings.

"Harry wait. That's a professional grade Snitch it'll be a lot harder to catch than the ones at Hogwarts. I wouldn't let it out in the house unless you wanted to spend the rest of the break looking for it." Blaise warned.

Harry immediately withdrew his hand. "Thanks for the warning. This will be great, I always love a challenge." Harry said with a grin.

The party lasted until eight O'clock when Madam Bones provided a portkey to take Blaise, Susan, Mrs. Zabini and herself back to the beach while Hannah and her mother floo'd home. Before they left though, they all wished Harry a Happy Birthday again, and said that they looked forward to seeing Draco and him the last week of August.

When everyone was gone, Harry walked into the living room and sat down on the couch exhausted. Mr. Malfoy joined him a moment later.

"Long day." Lucius commented.

"Yea, I'll say." Harry replied as Andi handed him a bottle of butterbeer.

"Harry before Draco comes into the room, I'd like for you to return that book of mine." Lucius said quietly.

Harry looked at Mr. Malfoy curiously for a second before he remembered the little black book that he slipped into Granger's bag. "I don't have it anymore, Lucius." Harry said with a smirk.

"What! Why? Where is it?" Lucius said quickly.

"Well whatever that book is can I assume that it's something Mr. Weasley would get in trouble for if an Auror decided to search his home?" Harry asked.

Lucius nodded ever so slightly causing Harry to laugh out loud.

"Harry what did you do with the diary?" Lucius asked now truly curious.

"Oh well, let's just say that I will have to inform the ministry to raid the home of the smartest witch in our year at some point this summer." Harry said with an evil smirk.

It took Lucius a moment to put two and two together, but when he did, a massive grin spread across his face.

A/N Well I hope you all liked it. It was my longest chapter so far with over 15K words. Hope you all like the twist I did with the Diary and please review of course. Oh and tell me if you like the idea of the Author's Challenge as I have a few more chapters were I could have one.

## Chapter 17

### Summer's End

Harry spent the next three weeks at Malfoy Manor with his nose buried in his new books. Harry was truly amazed at the powerful magic the books described. Harry was shocked to learn that The Big Book of Transfiguration was not just a theory oriented book like Advanced Charm Theory. The book actually listed hundreds if not thousands of ways to transfigure and then animate something to use as a means of attack or defense.

Harry of course desperately wanted to try out some of the more complex spells, but he knew he was not ready. His work with animation was only on par with an advanced second year maybe a third year Hogwarts student. Most of the defensive and offensive spells in the book required a far more thorough knowledge of using charms and transfiguration together.

The Big Book of Transfiguration also had a massive section on becoming an Animagus. Harry recalled that his purity test saying that he had the potential to become an Animagus, and he began to read up on it. After he read a few pages, Harry was officially convinced that he wanted to become an Animagus. While the process was incredibly difficult and very painful, it seemed like such a useful talent.

According to the book in order to become an Animagus, one must first find their form. There are two ways to do so. The first is to meditate into a dream like trance. Once in the trance your form will reveal itself. This way was the older method of finding one's form. It would take possibly several months and there was no guarantee that you would find your correct form.

The second way was a very recent invention known as the Animagus Revelius Potion, which was a powerful hallucinogen. Once someone drinks the potion their mind will instantly begin to create a dream world where you will set out to find your form. There is no consistency to the potion as everyone's form has the potential to be something else. Also, if someone does not have the ability to become an Animagus, their body will reject the potion causing a three hour long nightmare.

Harry didn't really care about that though; his blood purity test already told him he had the Animagus gift.

The only problem for Harry was that getting the potion would be incredibly difficult as it was labeled a class C dark substance. Which meant that the potion is legal, but only to those people who go to the ministry, take a very extensive test, and agree to place their name on a list registering them if they found a form. Harry didn't want the ministry to know that he wanted to become an Animagus. It just seemed like an invasion of his privacy.

Once someone has found their form, the second part of the Animagus process started. In order to change your internal organ and bone structure to make your forms, the person transforming has to closely study the form's anatomy. Also, spending time with the animal your form has taken was recommended to understand its physiology.

The last part of the process is the actual transformation. This is supposed to be very painful and dangerous; it is also the longest of the three steps. Since Human transfiguration is very difficult, it was necessary to practice transfiguring small parts of your anatomy at a time. For instance if you were to turn into a cat, you would begin by elongating your teeth or turning your hand into a paw. Only when you are able to transfigure every aspect of your body and back again should you attempt to change entirely.

The entire process is very time consuming, and even with the Animagus potion, the best wizards can not complete it in under a six months.

Studying up on the Animagus transformation wasn't the only thing Harry was reading though. Harry found all the books Lucius had gotten him incredibly interesting. Professor Flitwick's book, 1001 Ways to Use Charms to Curse Your Enemies, was shockingly violent. When Lucius had told Harry that Flitwick was a dueling champion, Harry clearly underestimated what that meant. Flitwick's book described some of the most violent charms work Harry had ever seen. The book also claimed that many of the spells were created by Flitwick himself. Harry made a mental note to try out several of the

charms he felt he could do, this included the scorching hex and the bone vanishing charm.

While the bone vanishing charm was fairly complex, Harry knew he would be able to do it as he had felt its effects early this summer when the healer at St. Mungos used it on him.

The most impressive spells though in Flitwick's book had to be the elemental spells. Apparently during his dueling years, Flitwick liked to use the elemental magic or spells that focus the effects of Earth, Wind, Fire, Water, and Lightning. Flitwick had created an entire arsenal of spells to increase the standard elemental spells. Flitwick turned the standard fire curse, *incendio*, into a seventy foot tall pillar of fire. He transformed the water spouting curse, *Augmenti*, into a spell that shot water out of his wand with the force of a cannon. Flitwick had an entire chapter on how he transformed a basic cleaning charm for removing dust into a powerful spell that sent hurricane winds at an opponent. Flitwick also improved upon the concussion hex turning it into an earthquake spell. For lightening, Flitwick poured out a large amount of raw magic into a single spot. When the magic got too condensed, it shot out bolts of red lighting, which Flitwick controlled.

Harry could only shake his head at the power his docile charms teacher must possess.

Dumbledore's book, *Defensive Transfiguration*, was the book Harry thought he would get the most immediate use of. As angry as he was with the Headmaster, Harry could not deny that the man was clearly a genius. Dumbledore's book described how simple transfigurations could be effectively used during battle to conserve energy. Dumbledore listed about a hundred very easy transfigurations, many of which Harry could already do. He then described how simply focusing on enlarging the size or animating the transfiguration could provide excellent and easy shielding. Dumbledore sighted several real life examples of how this worked for him. Harry's favorite of these examples was during a fight against Grindlewald. Dumbledore wrote that he was caught off guard by several of Grindlewalds spells and was flung against a tree. Grindlewald sent the killing curse at him,

and Dumbledore transfigured a nearby mouse into a seven foot tall matchbox to block it.

When Harry really got to thinking about Dumbledore's book, he came to the conclusion that if simple transfiguration could be used for defense, they could also be used for offense. If he was able to turn a match into a seven foot long pin and launch it at someone's chest that would be an incredibly effective offensive spell.

When Harry wasn't being "an insufferable bookworm" as Draco like to say, the two of them would work on Occulmency or play Quidditch. Harry had successfully built his 7th mental barrier while Draco had just started on his third.

Draco also convinced Harry to use the professional snitch that he was given for his birthday. Harry was hesitant as he didn't want to lose such a great gift, but he eventually relented. That turned out to be a mistake. It took Harry nearly four hours before he was able to catch the little golden ball once it was loose. Harry had actually chased after the snitch, only to be eluded, seven times before he caught it.

The only time Harry was disappointed during the three weeks was when his anonymous tip that Hermione Granger had a dark artifact was discarded by the DMLE. Lucius had inquired about it, and he told Harry that the Aurors didn't find any substantial evidence to back the claim.

Harry had been corresponding with Tonks and Ginny a lot during the last three weeks. Since Harry didn't have an Owl, Andi was his mail carrier, something his elf was only too happy to do. This dramatically improved how fast Harry could get letters to his friends.

Tonks would mostly write about how her mum and her were still on the outs, but how excited she was about seeing them at the beach.

Ginny was at first shocked to find out that Harry had his own house elf, but she returned the surprise when she included a letter to Draco in her reply. Draco said that letter was rather simple and it was just her saying hello and how nice it was to meet him in Diagon Alley. Draco of course took advantage of the situation and immediately

replied to her. Soon Ginny was writing letters to both of them daily. Harry and Draco would ask Ginny about everything from her relationship with her brothers to how far she had gotten learning magic. Ginny responded to all of their questions. She did write that on August the 12th Fred and George had seen Andi, but that nobody had believed them.

On the evening of the 15th, Harry was surprised to find Draco talking to his house elf Trixi and handing her a letter.

::Flashback::

"Draco what are you doing?" Harry asked causing Draco to jump in surprise.

"N-Nothing." Draco said quickly.

"Who are you sending that letter to?" Harry asked.

"No one. I was just..." Draco said.

"Oh come off it Draco, I don't care if you are sending a love letter to Parkinson. I mean as long as you aren't writing Granger." Harry said with a grin.

Draco made a disgusted face when Harry mentioned Parkinson, which was only topped when Harry mentioned Granger. "Please Harry give me some credit." Draco drawled.

"So who are you writing?" Harry asked.

Draco sighed, "Weasley."

"Why in Merlin's name would you be writing, Weasley?" Harry asked in shock.

"Well not Weasley, I meant Ginny." Draco clarified.

"Oh. Why are you writing her?" Harry asked.

"Well...I...ugh...well what I mean to say is she really isn't that bad. I mean she's a pureblood, she'll probably be a Slytherin, and she really doesn't like her family." Draco said.

Harry raised an eyebrow slightly, coming from Draco that was very high praise.

"Oh come on Harry, you can't tell me you don't think of her as a friend now. I mean you might have started this off as a joke, but she's really a lot different than her brothers. You also can't tell me that you would have bought her a wand if you didn't like her a little bit." Draco said accusingly.

Harry took a moment to think about that. It was true; he really didn't have anything negative to say about the littlest Weasley. She clearly was nothing like Ron, the Twins, or Percy. Harry was now almost positive she wouldn't be a Gryffindor. She was funny, sarcastic, and held contempt for almost every member of her family. When Harry really truly thought about it, he did consider her a friend.

"I guess you're right. So what did you write her about?" Harry asked.

"Oh she asked me for a list of spells to practice." Draco said.

"Well let me help, I might be able to add something." Harry said as Draco opened the letter to show Harry.

::End Flashback::

Eventually the two of them compiled a list of spells and potions that they thought she should learn before getting to Hogwarts. It was fairly simple stuff that she would learn in the first few weeks, but she was very appreciative of it. The only non first year spell was the disarming spell, but Harry didn't think she would have time to learn it.

The high point of the three weeks for Harry and Draco came on August the 19th. Ginny had written and told them that she was working on the flying charm in the kitchen when Ron had come downstairs. When Ron noticed that she was doing magic and no warnings from the ministry had come, he assumed that the decree for

underage magic was not in effect. Ron proceeded to go upstairs and did several spells. Harry and Draco couldn't stop laughing when he read how the idiotic Weasley had gotten three warnings for underage magic within two minutes of each other. Apparently, Mr. Weasley had to call in every favor he had at the Ministry to make sure Ron wasn't expelled and his wand snapped.

Ginny did say that she had to explain everything to her mum, but she hadn't gotten in trouble as she did nothing wrong. However, she did mention to watch out for Ron and the twins as they had found out from her mother that Harry had been the one to tell her about the loophole to do magic.

Finally, the day of August the 23rd had arrived. Draco and Harry were both ready to go to the beach where they would meet up with Tonks, Blaise, Susan, Hannah, and Ernie. Andi had already taken their trunks to Blaise's family's summer home so Harry and Draco were just waiting for the portkey to activate. At ten o'clock, Harry and Draco felt the familiar pull behind the naval as they were taken from the manor.

Zabbini Family Summer Home, Unplotable.

Harry and Draco landed in a well furnished living room.

"Harry, Draco good to see you two." Blaise said walking into the room.

"You too, Blaise." Harry said.

"How's your summer been?" Draco asked.

"Oh it's been a blast. Thanks for telling us how that Sony worked Harry. Between you and Tonks we were able to get it to work. Draco, muggles have this weird box that shows pictures on it. There are like five hundred different numbers and each number shows something different. Number 44 is actually dedicated to nothing but showing how to cook certain foods. Our house elves have been watching it nonstop for the last two days." Blaise said with a grin.

"Blaise I'm sure they don't care about that stupid Sony. It's not that great. Hi guys!" Susan said stepping into the room.

"Hi Susan." Harry and Draco said pleasant.

"So are Tonks, Hannah, and Ernie here yet?" Harry asked.

"Nope you're the first to arrive." Susan said.

"Can you explain to me why you invited Macmillan, Susan?" Draco asked.

"Er well actually she didn't. My parents invited his parents." Blaise admitted.

"Seriously, Draco, just because I'm in Hufflepuff doesn't mean I like to listen to Ernie's condescending mouth. I wouldn't have invited him if you paid me." Susan said indignity.

"Sorry, Susan. I just assumed you invited him as I don't think Ernie and Blaise spoke the entire year." Draco said.

"It's ok, I probably would have suspected me also." Susan said.

"So when is everyone else suppose to get here?" Harry asked.

"Ugh well. Tonks' portkey activates at one and Hannah and Ernie's are at noon I think." Susan said.

"Ok so what do you want to do for the next two hours?" Harry asked.

"I suppose we could show you around the house and grounds. It's pretty big so it'll take some time." Susan said.

Harry and Draco proceeded to follow Blaise and Susan around the house and grounds for a while. The house was shockingly large with both a girls and a boys' wing. There were three kitchens, two dining rooms, eight guest bedrooms, and a swimming pool. They finished their tour a quarter till twelve and walked into the kitchen where they found Madam Bones, Mr. and Mrs. Zabini, and Mr. Malfoy talking.

"Hello Auntie." Susan said smiling.

"Hello Susan. Have you and Blaise shown Harry and Draco around?" Madam Bones said.

"Yes ma'am." Blaise said straightening up.

Harry and Draco held in their snickers at seeing Blaise tense up so much around Madam Bones.

"So Mr. Potter, Mr. Malfoy what do you think of our little summer get away?" Mr. Zabbini asked.

"It's brilliant." They said together causing the three adults to laugh.

"Well I'm glad you like it." Mrs. Zabbini said with a grin.

"What are you doing home already, Auntie?" Susan asked as she sat down next to Madam Bones.

"Oh well I spotted Lucius at the Ministry and since it's such a slow day. I took a half a day off and invited him over for lunch." Madam Bones said.

"And we've been talking about you four ever since." Mrs. Zabbini said with a grin.

"Oh what about?" Blaise asked as he took a seat at the table along with Harry and Draco.

"Oh, mostly how you four were all in the top ten students in your year. I can't believe I was nervous that your grades might not be as good because you were a Slytherin and not a Ravenclaw, Blaise." Mr. Zabbini said with a grin.

"Where you a Ravenclaw, Sir?" Harry asked.

"That I was. Class of '73; however the love of my life was a treacherous serpent two years my elder." Mr. Zabbini said causing Mrs. Zabbini to smack him on the head.

"So, Harry, Lucius tells us you were first this year in Charms, Transfiguration, and Defense. I must admit that is very impressive." Madam Bones said.

"Er well thank you ma'am." Harry said not exactly knowing what to say.

"And Draco your father tells me you were number one in Potions and top three in Charms, Defense, and Transfiguration. Tell me do either of you have an aspiration to becoming Aurors?" Madam Bones asked.

Harry and Draco looked at each other.

"Er...well..." Draco said

"Amelia leave them alone. They are just first years; you'll have plenty of time to recruit all our children when they are older." Mrs. Zabini said with a smile.

Madam Bones blushed slightly.

"Auntie already tried to recruit Blaise earlier this summer. I found him twenty minutes into her speech. He was too frightened to tell her to stop." Susan said as Blaise sputtered.

"That's not true. I was really just interested in hearing what she had to say." Blaise said blushing slightly.

"Blaise dear, Slytherins are suppose to be good at lying. You really do need to work on that." Mrs. Zabini said with a grin.

"So have you been recruited?" Draco asked Susan.

"Oh, I've been recruited for the proud ranks of the Aurors since I was five." Susan said with a smile.

"Now I don't think I was that bad." Madam Bones said.

"No you are wonderful, Auntie." Susan said with a grin as two thuds were heard from the room next door.

"Oh sounds like the Abbots and the Macmillan's have arrived. Susan be a dear and tell them where we are." Madam Bones said.

Susan nodded and ran into the room next door. A few seconds later she arrived with several people in tow.

"Amelia great to see you." Mrs. Abbot said as she came over.

"You also Michele, David how are you?" Madam Bones asked.

"Oh we are grand, Amelia. I don't think Hannah has been this excited for some time." Mr. Abbot said.

"Hello Hannah." Madam Bones said with a smile.

"Hello, Madam Bones." Hannah replied with a smile as Susan grabbed her arm.

"Hi everyone." Hannah said as she took a seat next to her parents.

"Hi Hannah." Blaise said warmly.

"How's your summer been?" Harry asked.

"Oh it's been wonderful. How was yours?" Hannah asked.

"It was fun, I spent most of it with Draco and Tonks." Harry said.

"Yeah your party was awesome. That was at your house wasn't it Draco?" Hannah asked.

"Yep, what have you been up to these last few weeks?" Draco asked.

"Oh not much. I've been really excited waiting to come here." Hannah said.

"Excited? Really I don't think excited adequately describes it." Mr. Abbot said with a grin.

"Daaaad." Hannah said embarrassed .

"Hannah was in Madam Malkins for almost six hours trying on clothing." Mr. Abbot said as Harry, Blaise, and Draco laughed.

"Thanks Daddy." Hannah said her face now bright red.

"Anytime dear." Mr. Abbot said with a warm smile.

"Hello, David." Mr. Macmillan said sitting down with his family.

"Ah Michael, how have you been." Mr. Abbot said.

"Well thank you." Mr. Macmillan responded.

Harry had to roll his eyes. At least now he knew where Ernie got his pompous nature from.

"Hello all." Ernie said evenly.

"Hello, Ernie." Susan said.

"How's your summer been?" Hannah asked.

"As expected. I was a little disappointed in my marks, but I did fairly well." Ernie replied as he stared daggers at Harry.

"Oh come off it, Ernie, you still aren't mad at Harry for failing you on that Transfiguration test are you?" Hannah asked.

"Of course I'm not." Ernie replied even though everyone could tell it was a horrible lie.

"Well that's good because McGonagall said I'd probably be grading a bit more this year." Harry said with a smile.

"Ah Harry Potter, I'm Michael Macmillan, Ernest's father." Mr. Macmillan said.

Harry fought the urge to roll his eyes at the man and shook his hand. "Nice to meet you, sir." Harry replied.

"I must admit this is a rather impressively assembled group. What with yourself, Ms. Bones, Mr. Zabini, and Mr. Malfoy all being in the top ten students this year." Mr. Macmillan said.

"Er well I guess." Harry said.

"Tell me do you four have some sort of study group? If so, I would love for Ernest to join you." Mr. Macmillan said.

Even if we had a study group, your son sure as hell wouldn't be invited. Harry thought. As he looked at Draco, Susan, and Blaise, he could tell they were thinking the same thing.

"Actually, sir, there is no study group. We all pretty much work on our own. Harry helps Draco and I out in Transfiguration and Charms class, but he does that for all the Slytherins." Blaise said.

"I see." Mr. Macmillan said as he turned away and began a conversation with Mr. Zabini.

Harry spent the next twenty minutes talking to Blaise, Susan, Hannah, and Draco. They were all having a good time until Mr. Macmillan again decided to interject himself into their conversation.

"Mr. Potter?" Mr. Macmillan asked.

Harry tensed up and turned to Mr. Macmillan. "Yes, sir?" Harry asked.

"I was just talking with Lucius, Marcus, and Amelia about my rather groundbreaking reform bill, and I wanted your opinion on it?" Mr. Macmillan asked.

Politics? This guy wants my opinions on politics is he kidding me? Harry thought.

"Michael, I very much doubt that Harry has ever bothered to read your bill." Lucius said condescendingly.

"Well perhaps he should. After all, a lot of people will listen to his opinion. Harry my bill will stipend forty thousand Galleons a year to allow muggleborns to receive a better introduction to the wizarding world. I would like for you to publicly support the bill. After all, your mother could have greatly benefited from this." Mr. Macmillan said pompously.

Harry was now desperately trying to reign in his temper. Ok this...this...this pompous idiot wants me to support a horrible bill, and he tried to manipulate me by brining up my mother.

Draco and Lucius could tell that Harry was very close to lashing out at Mr. Macmillan. Deciding that having Harry Potter assaulting a member of the wizengamot might not be the best idea, Lucius said, "Really, I hardly doubt Harry cares one way or another."

"Actually, Mr. Malfoy, I do." Harry said icily.

"See Lucius you shouldn't underestimate, Harry." Mr. Macmillan said with a broad grin.

"Mr. Macmillan, what exactly is the exchange rate for a Galleon to British Pound. That might help me figure out exactly how much you want to give away." Harry said desperately trying to not scream at the man.

"Oh well I'm not sure of the exact number, but I believe it fluctuates between ten and twenty pounds to a Galleon." Mr. Macmillan said dismissively.

"So you want to give forty thousand Galleons to provide muggleborns with what again?" Harry asked icily.

"To allow for an easier transition into the wizarding world, Harry. You know reduce the shock and all. It would probably help muggleborns do better at Hogwarts." Mr. Macmillan said with a smile.

"Well that has to be on of the dumbest things I've ever heard." Harry said strongly.

Harry never took his eyes off Mr. Macmillan, but he could tell that everyone was staring at him.

"Excuse me?" Mr. Macmillan said in disbelief.

"I said, I think that's the dumbest thing I've ever heard. You are aware that a muggleborn witch was the top student at Hogwarts this year, correct? So clearly not only is your plan unnecessary, but it's a waste of money. Madam Bones what would you do if you were given an extra forty thousand Galleons to your budget?" Harry asked not taking his eyes away from an increasingly angry Mr. Macmillan.

"I-I would probably use half of it on research and development, then split the rest between some tactical units as well as trying to recruit a Necromancer. England is the only of the elite wizarding nations without one, and fifteen thousand Galleons should be able to obtain one" Madam Bones said.

"Well I think that would be a far better use of ministry funds." Harry said with a grin.

"I see." Mr. Macmillan said clearly annoyed.

"Madam Bones, Mr. Malfoy if our ministry is the only one without a Necromancer then we should surly get one. I would suggest going to Minister Fudge and bring up taking fifteen thousand Galleons from Mr. Macmillan's proposal and using it for that. After all, if the Wizengamot is willing to spend forty thousand galleons on something as unnecessary as his bill, then surely they will have no problem approving fifteen thousand for something that is useful." Harry said with a grin.

"I guess you were right, Lucius. Clearly Mr. Potter doesn't understand..." Mr. Macmillan started.

"On the contrary, I think Harry makes an excellent point. Your bill isn't necessary at all, and England could use a Necromancer wouldn't you say Madam Bones?" Lucius asked with a grin.

"Well I've been trying to convince Cornelius for six years now that we needed one. Every time he has claimed that we didn't have the available funds. I think Harry makes an excellent suggestion." Madam Bones said smiling.

"Now see here, I think that spending fifteen thousand galleons on a Necromancer is clearly unnecessary. The French have always been willing to lend us theirs when we are in need." Mr. Macmillan said.

"And you don't find it embarrassing to call upon the French to help us?" Harry asked.

"Indeed we do, Harry. I hate having to contact Minister Rocairé. He's a rather pompous and annoying man. We also have to pay five thousand Galleons a fortnight to the French Government for the use of their Necromancer." Madam Bones said.

"Let's leave Harry alone about Politics Lord Macmillan. After all, he is only twelve I'm sure he would rather be talking about Quidditch." Mrs. Abbot said.

Harry was about to ask exactly what made someone a Lord, but his thought was interrupted when Mr. Abbot said, "Harry, Draco, Hannah tells me you are both on the Slytherin Quidditch team. That's rather impressive; I was a keeper for Gryffindor from my second year on. Who do you think will be your biggest challenge this season?"

"Probably the Gryffindors." Harry said.

"Yeah, I'd say the Gryffindors as well." Draco said.

"What? I think we'll end up beating you this year. After all, if you didn't spy on us during the Ravenclaw game, we would have had your entire playbook." Ernie said.

"You did have our entire playbook. After Montague was kicked off the team, he gave all of our plays to Diggory." Draco commented.

"Even with all of our old plays, you still only scored twice on us." Harry said with a grin.

"And let's face it. If it came down to Harry and Diggory it wouldn't even be close." Draco said with a grin.

Ernie just snorted indignantly and stopped talking to them, which made Harry and Draco very happy. They talked for a few more minutes before two loud thuds were heard in the next room.

"That must be Tonks. I'll go get her." Harry said with a smile.

"I'll come with you, I want to see Andromeda." Mrs. Abbot said.

"Wait, Mrs. Tonks came with her?" Harry asked hesitantly.

"Yes, I invited Andromeda to spend the week." Madam Bones said.

"Ah, well I guess I should take my leave then." Lucius said standing up.

"Lord Malfoy surely you can stay a little longer." Mr. Macmillan said sarcastically.

"No Lord Macmillan, I'm afraid I can not. Andromeda and I do not see eye to eye on a lot of things, and I believe it would be best if I depart. Besides I need to speak with Cornelius about using the money from your bill to acquire England a Necromancer." Lucius said causing Mr. Macmillan to stare daggers at Harry.

"Good day Lord and Lady Abbot. Marcus, Amanda, Amelia a pleasure as always." Lucius said as he departed away.

"Was that really necessary? I know he and Andromeda have had there problems, but surely..." Madam Bones said.

"I'm sorry ma'am, but it was." Harry said shortly.

"Very well, Harry." Madam Bones said as Tonks and Andromeda walked into the room.

"Hey guys." Tonks said with a grin as she ran over and gave Harry and Draco a hug.

"Michele how have you been?" Andromeda asked hugging her old school friend.

"Oh I've been great, Andy. How have you been?" Mrs. Abbot said as she pulled a chair out for Mrs. Tonks to sit on.

"I've been well, Nymphadora and I just came back from France a few weeks back." Andromeda said.

"How was it? I haven't been to France in many years." Mrs. Abbot said.

"Paris was beautiful as always." Andromeda said.

"Parker and Amanda Zabbini. Glad you could join us Mrs. Tonks." Mr. Zabbini said extending a hand.

"Thank you for your hospitality." Andromeda said shaking their hands.

"It's quite alright; Blaise had nothing but wonderful things to say about your daughter." Mrs. Zabbini said.

"Hello Andromeda." Madam Bones said.

"Oh Amelia how have you been?" Andromeda said smiling.

"I've been good. Now, if Lucius is able to convince Cornelius and the Wizengmot that we need fifteen thousand Galleons for a Necromancer, I will be a lot happier come November." Madam Bones said with a smile.

"Really, Amelia I doubt that the Wizengamot will be willing to do so." Andromeda said.

"Well actually Andromeda we might be closer to having our Necromancer then ever before." Amelia said as she began to describe the conversation between Harry and Lord Macmillan.

"So you're going to take the money from education reform for muggleborns to pay for a Necromancer? Amelia you can't be serious. I mean there hasn't been a bill to help muggleborns in the last fifty years; a Necromancer just isn't worth it. Wait does that mean that Lucius was here earlier?" Andromeda said as she looked up and saw Nymphadora and Draco Malfoy talking to each other.

"Yes he just left not five..."

Andromeda tuned her friend out though when she saw her daughter laughing with Harry Potter and Draco Malfoy. Suddenly a terrible fear spread throughout her body. No, my Nymphadora will not stay here with a Malfoy. I left the Black family because of their damn blood purism. I won't let my daughter befriend the people I fought so hard to keep her away from.

"Amelia, I thank you for the invitation to spend this week with you and the Zabini's, but unfortunately Nymphadora and I will have to leave now." Andromeda said standing up.

"Andy is everything alright?" Amelia asked as everyone stopped talking and looked on in shock.

"Yes, I am terribly sorry about all of this, Amelia, but we must go. Nymphadora gather your things." Andromeda said strongly as her daughter's eyes rose in disbelief.

In ten years, Amelia had never seen Andromeda Tonks so antsy and uncomfortable. "V-very well Andromeda I'm sorry to hear that." Amelia said still not sure of the problem.

"Perhaps we will be able to do something next summer." Andromeda said.

"Mum why can't we stay?" Tonks asked weakly.

Andromeda did her best not to look at the young Malfoy heir, but her eyes couldn't help but flicker to him once. Unfortunately her daughter seemed to catch it.

"No you can't be serious, mum." Tonks said standing up.

"Nymphadora get your things we will be leaving in five minutes." Andromeda said sharply.

"No mum, I'm going to stay here with my friends." Tonks said defiantly.

"Nymphadora Gamma Orionis Tonks we will be leaving in five minutes now get moving young lady." Mrs. Tonks said icily.

"No." Tonks said matching her mother's cold tone.

Harry and everyone else watched as mother and daughter stood defiantly at opposite ends of the table. Harry wanted to say something, anything that might resolve the situation, but nothing came to mind. Never in a hundred years would Harry have imagined Andromeda would be so uncomfortable around Draco that she would force Tonks to leave, especially after how much Tonks had been looking forward to this all summer.

"Mum I'm staying." Tonks said.

"Fine. Then next year I'll be transferring you to Beauxbatons. I'm glad you were able to pick up French so quickly Nymphadora." Andromeda said.

"Y-Y-You w-wouldn't." Tonks said as unshed tears started to well up in her eyes.

"Why not you said you liked the school when we visited. Now unless you come home with me right this instant, I'll be filing the paperwork later today. It might be too late for you to leave Hogwarts this year, but next year is another option entirely." Andromeda said.

Tonks had never been so frightened in her life. Mum wouldn't...she couldn't. Not when I have such good friends at Hogwarts now. She wouldn't make me leave. Seeing that her mother was still staring at

her impatiently, Tonks hugged Harry goodbye. "I'll see you on the first, Harry." She whispered as a single tear fell down her face.

Harry for his part was stunned. He could only reach out and wipe the tear off her face before Tonks left the table and joined her mother.

"I will see you at the Ministry, Amelia." Andromeda said as she guided Tonks upstairs to gather her things

"What just happened?" Hannah asked a few minutes later when it became apparent that they both were gone.

"I'm not sure dear." Mrs. Abbot said.

"What's Beauxbatons?" Susan asked.

"It's the magical academy of France." Draco responded sadly

"She was going to pull her out of Hogwarts?" Harry asked in shock.

"I'm sure she was just threatening, Beauxbatons doesn't have the reputation that Hogwarts has." Madam Bones said.

Harry could only shake his head and hope Madam Bones was right.

&&&

Harry and Draco were both glad that the next week past fairly quickly at the beach. Harry had sent a letter to Tonks the night she left; however, she didn't write him back. When Harry asked Andi why Tonks wouldn't reply, Andi simply said that Tonks was very sad. This of course made Harry and Draco very uncomfortable. They were so use to Tonks being so happy that they weren't exactly sure what to do. The only time Harry had ever seen Tonks really sad was Christmas.

Draco and Harry spent most of the week at the beach by themselves trying to figure out what to do about Tonks or practicing Occulmency. Harry was now working on his eighth mental wall while Draco had finished his third. Harry spent most of his night speaking with Salazar

about Tonks. Unfortunately, his familiar refused to do anything but play the Devil's advocate as he completed agreed with Mrs. Tonks' opinion about Draco.

September the first arrived blissfully for Harry and Draco. They said goodbye to everyone early the morning of the first and took a portkey back to Malfoy Mannor where they had breakfast. Harry had never been happier that he had Andi's help as she traveled between the Zabbini beach house and Malfoy Manor gathering all his missing possessions.

At ten thirty, Harry took a portkey and disappeared with Draco, Lucius, and Narcissa to an alley behind King's Cross. Harry and Draco walked behind Lucius and Narcissa into the station and through the barrier that separated the Hogwarts Express. Harry was pleasantly surprised to see that the station was fairly empty with forty minutes till the train's departure.

"Well I guess this is goodbye." Narcissa said as she hugged Draco.

"Bye mum." Draco said with a smile.

"Be good this year, son." Lucius said strictly.

"I will father." Draco said seriously.

"Good, now Harry please try to be careful this year." Lucius said with a hint of a smile.

"Hey I was very careful last year." Harry said with a grin.

"Please Harry how many times were you in the hospital wing? 5? 6? I don't consider that being careful." Narcissa said with a smile.

"Er well I'll do better this year, I promise." Harry said with a grin.

"Good." Narcissa said with a smile.

"Andi." Harry called out.

"Yes, Master Harry?" Andi asked popping next to Harry.

"Andi, please find an empty compartment near the end of the train and put Draco and my trunk in there." Harry said.

"Yes, master Harry." Andi said as she and the two trunks disappeared.

"Harry I must admit that you did pick an excellent house elf. She almost acts normal." Lucius said.

"Yes well, Salazar did say she had strong magic." Harry said as he stroked his familiar who was asleep on his shoulders.

'What isss it?' Salazar hissed sleepily.

Harry looked around before hissing, 'Nothing my friend. I was just telling the Rabbitsss how you sssaid Andi would be a good house elf. Go back to sssleep.'

'Damn Rabbitsss alwaysss think they know everything. Don't bother waking me up for them.' Salazar mumbled before falling back asleep.

"What did he want?" Draco asked with a roll of his eyes.

"Oh he was just wondering why I said his name." Harry said.

"He can understand English?" Draco asked in shock.

"Er well no. He knows his name in English, and he usually wants to know why he's being talked about." Harry replied.

"Oh so if I said Salazar, Salazar, Salazar, Salazar, Salazar..." Draco said with a grin.

Salazar stuck his head up. 'What is the rabbit sssaying? Why does he constantly call me?'

'He isss teasssing you. I told him that you know your name in Englisssh.' Harry hissed.

'Tell him if he doessss it again, I will bit hisss tongue. I need my ssssleep.' Salazar said menacingly.

"Salazar says if you continue to mock him he'll bit your tongue. He's rather grumpy when he's tired." Harry said causing Draco's grin to disappear.

"Damn snake." Draco grumbled.

"Master, Harry, I have placed your and Mr. Draco's trunks in an empty compartment." Andi said bowing low.

"Excellent, well I guess this is goodbye. Andi show us the compartment." Harry said.

"Right this way, Master Harry." Andi said with a big smile.

Harry and Draco followed Andi till they reached an empty compartment near the back of the train. They stepped inside and found their trunks already placed above their seats.

"Is this to master's liking?" Andi asked hesitantly.

"Yes Andi this is good, thank you." Harry said dismissively as the little elf smiled and then vanished.

"Where do you think elves go when they aren't doing anything?" Draco asked.

"Dunno. I guess we could ask sometime." Harry shrugged.

Harry and Draco sat together talking for about twenty minutes. Harry was beginning to get nervous he had yet to see Tonks. He was silently praying that her mum didn't try to transfer her when he saw someone with spiked pink hair lugging a very large trunk. He was about to tell Draco to look at the girl when he got a clearer look at her. Harry stared open mouthed when he realized that the girl with spiked pink hair was actually Tonks.

"Nothing, I'll be right back." Harry said.

"If you say so, just be back before the train leaves." Draco said.

Harry quickly ran out of the compartment and off the train. He started to look for Tonks, but in the dense crowd of people, he couldn't find her. He was about to give up and go back on the train when he heard someone yell, "I DON'T NEED YOUR HELP MUM LEAVE ME ALONE!"

Harry instantly recognized Tonks' voice and began making his way over to her. He spotted her standing about twenty feet away with Mrs. Tonks. Judging from the look on Mrs. Tonks' face and the way Tonks' hair was beginning to turn from pink to red, Harry would say they were having a bit of a row.

Harry stayed where he was since he didn't want to make the situation any worse. Harry watched as Tonks and Mrs. Tonks proceeded to get into a full blown argument in front of everybody in the station. Harry wasn't sure what was being said, but as Mrs. Tonks' face started to turn the same shade of purple that Harry was accustomed to seeing right before his uncle hit him, he decided to intervene. However, Tonks stomped off before he could make his way over to her.

Harry began forcing her way through the crowd trying to catch up with Tonks, but the Weasley Twins spotted her and caught up to her first.

"Oiy look Fred, it is little Nymphadora without her Potter protector." George said with a grin.

"I like the hairdo Nymph, I bet all the Slytherins will be all over you this year." Fred said.

"I guess we know why her mum named her Nymph." George said.

"Shut it you two." Tonks said weakly as a tear threatened to fall down her face.

"Aww looks like..." Fred began.

"Little Nympha..." George continued.

"Dora is going to..." Fred said.

"Cry." They finished together.

Harry was close enough to hear what the Twins were saying. He pushed his way through the crowd and tackled the closest Weasley twin. Harry and either Fred or George crashed to the ground and Harry brought back his fist and slammed it into the twin's side, eliciting a sharp yelp of pain from the twin on the ground.

Harry was able to throw a few more punches before the other twin pulled him off of his brother and hit him in the gut. When the Weasley's punch connected, Harry let out a moan of pain. The Weasley twin's had very boney hands and their fists hurt almost as much as Dudley's. Harry was about to throw another punch when the twin's eyes rolled to the back of his head and fell to the ground.

Harry looked up and saw Tonks standing before him with a look of pure hatred etched on her face. Harry saw the other Weasley draw his wand and cast a spell at Tonks. Harry watched in slow motion as the purplish spell was about to hit her. At the last possible second though, there was a loud pop and a silver dome appeared in front of Tonks blocking the spell.

Harry drew his wand to cast a spell at the twin, but Tonks beat him to it and sent the full body bind at the twin causing him to topple over. With both twins incapacitated, Harry walked forward and hugged Tonks very tightly.

"Thank you for the shield." Tonks said.

"I-I didn't do that." Harry said as they pulled apart.

"Who did then?" Tonks asked.

"I casted the spell on Master Harry's friend." Andi said appearing out of nowhere.

"You cast that shield?" Harry asked in shock.

"I-I-I is sorry Master Harry. Andi saw that Master Harry's friend was going to be cursed by the bad wizard. Should Andi punish herself?" Andi asked weakly.

"NO!" Harry and Tonks shouted.

"No, Andi you did good thank you. You may go now." Harry said.

Andi bowed deeply and disappeared.

"I love that little elf." Tonks said with a smile.

"POTTER WHAT DID YOU DO TO MY BROTHERS!"

Harry and Tonks turned to see several angry Gryffindors led by Ron Weasley marching towards him.

"I didn't do anything. Tonks' here on the other hand gave them exactly what they deserved." Harry said menacingly.

"You had better watch it this year, Nymphad..." Ron stopped talking though when he felt a wand being drawn to the back of his head.

"I would suggest, Weasley, that when someone tells you to call her by her surname, you abide by her request." Draco said menacingly.

"WHAT IS GOING ON HERE!" Mr. Weasley yelled walking towards the group.

"I believe I can answer that." Harry said.

Mr. Weasley looked up at Harry and said, "Well start explaining."

"The twins said some rather horrible things to my friend Tonks. I lost control and tackled that one." Harry said pointing to the Weasley in the body bind.

"We got into a fist fight, which ended when that attacked me from behind. Tonks ended that fight before it could really begin by hitting him with a stunner." Harry said pointing to the stunned Weasley twin. "Then that one," Harry pointed to the Weasley in the body bind, "sent a spell at her, but my house elf managed to cast a shield to block it. Tonks then hit him with a full body bind."

"Mr. Potter this is unacceptable. I know Fred and George can be a little crude, but certainly they didn't say anything that merited this kind of attack." Mr. Weasley said strongly.

"Sir were you here?" Harry said menacingly.

"No." Mr. Weasley said narrowing his eyes.

"Then I will simply tell you that what they said was horrible, and that they deserved what they got. If they try anything on the train, it will only result in them being hurt more." Harry said as he stared at the Weasley in the body bind.

"Don't worry father I shall notify the professors about this." Percy said importantly.

"Good and I'll inform Mr. Malfoy about the twin's horrible behavior towards Tonks over the past few years. I think it's about time the board of Governors does something. They really are a menace to the entire school." Harry said locking eyes with Percy.

"Harry lets just leave. I don't want to spend anymore time with Fred and George." Tonks said practically spitting at the twin's names.

"Fine, Andi!" Harry said.

"Yes Master Harry?" Andi asked after appearing at his side.

"Please take Tonks' trunk to Draco and my compartment. We'll be in there shortly." Harry said ignoring the shocked look of several Gryffindors.

"Yes master Harry, sir." Andi said as he grabbed Tonks trunk and disappeared.

Harry, Tonks, and Draco pushed past the group of Gryffindors and Mr. Weasley. They proceeded to get on the train and enter their compartment.

"Sorry about all that Tonks. I guess I kind of lost it when I heard what they said to you." Harry said blushing slightly.

"It's alright. I was going to hex them anyway. Bloody Weasleys." Tonks huffed.

"Do you really want to inform my father about this?" Draco asked.

"No as I sort of started the fight nothing good could happen. I do think we should start to make a list of everything the twins do, and then try to get them kicked out." Harry said vehemently.

"Good idea." Draco said as there was a knock on the compartment door.

Harry, Draco, and Tonks all drew their wands and Draco said, "it's open."

The door slid open to reveal a very embarrassed looking Ginny Weasley. "Er...can I sit in here?" She asked hesitantly.

"Sure." Harry and Draco said as Tonks said, "No."

Ginny looked between Harry, Draco, and Tonks unsure of what to do.

"Harry, she's a Weasley." Tonks said flatly.

"Tonks she's really not like her brothers." Draco said causing Tonks to look at him in shock.

"Draco's right Tonks. I'm sure Ginny would have cursed the twins in a heart beat." Harry said.

"Wait you cursed the twins?" Ginny asked in astonishment.

"Yes, do you have a problem with that?" Tonks asked.

"Yea, I wish I was there to see it. What happened?" Ginny asked sitting next to Tonks.

Tonks looked at the little red head in disbelief. "Ugh, Harry got into a fist fight with one of them after they said some stuff to me. I stunned the one Harry was fighting before putting the full body bind on the other one."

"How long have you been able to do the stunning spell, Tonks?" Draco asked.

"Oh, at the very end of last year I finally got it to work. It's actually a fairly easy spell really." Tonks said.

"I wish I could have cursed them all summer, but mum said if I did she would take my wand away and not let me practice anymore." Ginny said.

"Whatever." Tonks mumbled as the compartment door opened. Blaise and Susan walked inside and smiled at Tonks.

"Hey Tonks." Blaise said pleasantly.

"Hi Blaise sorry about the stuff at the beach my mum's...well we aren't getting along right now." Tonks said.

"Yeah I think was obvious, Tonks. Don't worry about it though." Susan said with a smile.

"Blaise, Susan this is Ginny Weasley. Ginny this is Blaise Zabini and Susan Bones." Draco said.

"Weasley?" Blaise asked raising an eyebrow.

"She's apparently not like her brothers." Tonks said sarcastically as the train started to move.

"Come on Tonks be nice." Harry chided with a grin.

Tonks just huffed, looked out the window, and turned her hair purple.

"Wow, how did you do that?" Ginny asked in shock.

Tonks seemed to be ignoring the little Weasley's question so Draco answered for her. "Tonks is a Metamorphmagus. She can change her appearance whenever she wants."

"Wow that's so cool, I bet all the boys really like you." Ginny said quietly.

"Yes, your brothers were saying something similar on the platform." Tonks said icily.

"Er...um...I'm sorry about Fred and George they aren't the best brothers. Truthfully the only two brothers I can stand are living abroad. Percy is such a rulemaster, Ron actually tried to snap my wand when Harry bought it for me, and the twins...well the twins are arseholes." Ginny said.

Harry noticed Tonks look at Ginny with a little less contempt after that little revelation. Maybe Tonks actually started to pity that Ginny actually had to grow up with that kind of family. "As long as you recognize it, I guess you can't be that bad. Just don't end up in Gryffindor, like your moronic brothers." Tonks said sharply.

"Er...I won't I swear. What house are all of you in?" Ginny asked.

"Hufflepuff." Susan said.

"Slytherin." Blaise replied.

"Slytherin of course." Draco said proudly.

Salazar woke up and began hissing at all of them to be quiet. Harry fought the urge to laugh at his familiar's annoyance and said, "Slytherin."

"Gryffindor." Tonks practically spat.

Ginny's eyes rose in shock. "You're a Gryffindor!"

"Unfortunately." Tonks drawled.

Ginny was about to respond when the compartment door slid open, and a very irate looking Ron Weasley stood there with the twins, Lee Jordan, an Irish Gryffindor Harry had never spoken to before, and a black boy named Dean Thomas.

"Go away Weasley. Unless you want a repeat of what happened outside." Harry threatened as everyone but Ginny fingered their wands.

"Piss off Potter, we are just here to rescue Ginny from you." One of the Twins barked.

"I'm fine right where I am, George." Ginny spat.

"Ginny, Potter's a dark wizard you need to be with family. We'll protect you from his group of..." Ron started.

"..." Ginny said standing up.

"It doesn't matter, Ron. Once she's a Gryffindor they won't talk to her anymore. After all, she doesn't have any kinky talents like Nymmy over there." Fred said menacingly.

"Expelliarmus!" Harry, Draco, Tonks, Blaise, and Susan all shouted.

Ginny watched in shock as the five spells all slammed into Fred. Her brother was flung from the compartment, smashed against the closed compartment door behind him, and fell to the ground unconscious. Ginny had a brief urge to go and check on him, but she quickly pushed that thought away when she remembered her brother's crude words. She always knew her brothers could go overboard with their jokes.

"You'll get yours this year, Potter." Ron spat as the Gryffindors quickly grabbed Fred and left.

"I guess we shouldn't put this one on the list either, huh?" Draco asked Harry.

"Nah, I don't think so." Harry replied.

"What list?" Blaise asked.

"It's nothing, Blaise. It's just a private joke between Harry, Draco, and I." Tonks said.

The rest of the train ride went by without any interruptions. Harry, Draco, Tonks, Susan, Hannah, and Blaise all shared a carriage up to the castle while Ginny followed Hagrid with the other first years.

"I don't like her." Tonks commented as soon as Ginny was out of ear shot.

"Come on Tonks give her a break. She's not like her brothers." Draco said.

"She'll end up a Gryffindor just like the rest of them regardless of your little manipulations." Tonks spat.

"Manipulations?" Susan asked.

"Oh well Harry and Draco took it upon themselves at the end of last term to..." Tonks said.

"Tonks! Regardless of how it started Ginny is Draco and my friend. So please try to get along with her." Harry said cutting off Tonks.

"Fine! But when she ends up in Gryffindor and your whole plan was for nothing, I'll say I told you so." Tonks said.

Everyone was quiet the rest of the trip. When they arrived at the Great Hall, Tonks sat down at the Gryffindor table next to Granger while Susan and Hannah went to Hufflepuff table.

"Er what's up with Tonks? I mean I understand that she hates the Weasleys, but she seems to be really upset." Blaise said as he sat down at the Slytherin table.

"I don't know." Harry admitted as the first years entered the Great Hall.

The sorting slowly started and the anticipation of Ginny's sorting was starting to get to Draco.

"Can't that hat sort them any faster." Draco said.

"I know it didn't take this long for us did it?" Harry asked.

"Actually I think it did." Blaise said.

"Just because your last name starts with a Z, Blaise." Draco commented.

"So what will you do if Weasley ends up in Gryffindor?" Blaise asked with a grin.

Draco and Harry shared a look with each other. Neither of them had considered Ginny getting into Gryffindor.

"Er that won't happen." Draco said.

"Yea, no way." Harry said.

"But...what if it does? Will you just drop her as a friend as Tonks rubs that you were wrong in your faces?" Blaise asked.

"Ginny won't be a Gryffindor, Blaise. I can feel it. It's like when I met Harry and knew he was a Slytherin." Draco said pompously.

Harry snorted. "Yeah you knew I was meant for Slytherin after I tackled you for calling me a muggleborn in Madam Malkins."

"Er well yeah, but after you did that I knew you were a Slytherin." Draco said with a sheepish grin.

"Weasley, Ginerva." Professor McGonagall said.

"This is it." Harry said with a grin.

"Slytherin, Slytherin. Come on Ginny Slytherin." Draco said.

"Gryfindor, Gryfindor." Blaise said.

"Blaise what are you saying." Harry hissed.

"What? I think the look on your faces would be hilarious if she ended up in..." Blaise said.

"SLYTHERIN!" The hat screamed out.

"YES!" Draco yelled in triumph.

Harry couldn't contain his laughter when he saw the stunned looks on Percy, Ron, the twins, and professor McGonagall. He was laughing so hard that he missed the hurt look on Tonks' face.

Ginny walked over to the Slytherin table, and Blaise moved over to give her room to sit.

"Congratulations Ginny. I knew you had it in you." Draco said with a smile.

"Thanks. I don't think that my brothers are all that happy though." Ginny said.

"Forget them, Ginny. You don't want to end up like them anyway. Mindless Gryffindors." Harry said.

"Yeah, you're right." Ginny said reluctantly.

"I have some start of term announcements to make. First I would like to remind all students that the Forbidden Forest is out of bounds. Some of our older students should also remember that. Next I would

like to welcome Gilderoy Lockhart. He will be the new Defense against the Dark Arts instructor..." Dumbledore said.

"Oh no." Harry and Draco moaned as the Great Hall broke out into applause.

Harry and Draco continued to shake their heads in disbelief as Lockhart actually took a bow.

"This year is going to be horrible." Harry said shaking his head.

"What's wrong with Lockhart? My mum owns almost all his books." Blaise asked.

"He's a fake." Harry said rolling his eyes.

"Are you serious?" Blaise asked.

"Yep father hates him." Draco said.

"S-so you don't think he'll be a good teacher?" Ginny asked.

"No Ginny, I doubt he'll be any good." Harry said as the food appeared.

The feast was wonderful as always and when it was over Harry, Draco, Blaise, and Ginny got up to head down to the Common Room.

"So Harry do you think Andi helped make the meal?" Draco asked as they left the Great Hall.

"I dunno, Andi?" Harry called out.

There was a pop and Andi appeared. "Yes Master Harry sir?"

"Andi did you help in the opening feast?" Harry asked.

"No Master Harry, Andi arrived too late to help with the cooking. I is not that good at cooking yet either, sir." Andi said her ears dripping slightly.

"Well don't worry about it, Andi. You're here to learn from the others elves. I'm sure you will get good." Harry said.

"Potter! Malfoy! What have you done to my sister and what is that?" Ron said as he and the twins stormed over.

"Andi you may leave now." Harry said.

"Yes sir, master Harry, sir." Andi said as she disappeared.

"That was the house elf we saw at the Burrow!" Fred said in shock.

"Yes, I suppose it was." Harry said with a smirk.

"You two weren't lying." Ron said astonished.

"No Harry's house elf would carry our letters." Ginny said smugly.

"Rather Slytherin of us wouldn't you say, Weasleys?" Draco commented.

"Ginny how could you betray our family and end up in Slytherin!" Ron yelled.

"How dare you! Just because I'm not some mindless Gryffindor doesn't make me any less of a Weasley." Ginny barked.

"Ginny you need to stop hanging out with Malfoy and Potter. They are both dark wizards. You know what dad always says about Mr. Malfoy!" George said.

"What exactly does your father say about Mr. Malfoy, Weasley?" Harry asked darkly.

"Stuff it Potter this is between Ginny and us." Fred said.

"If you think we are just going to let you turn Ginny against her house, then you are delusional, Weasley. Ginny will be an excellent Slytherin.

Now Ginny you don't need to hear any of your brothers' propaganda let's go." Draco said as he started to walk towards the dungeons.

Harry, Ginny, and Blaise all followed Draco away from the screaming Weasleys. When they reached the entrance to the common room, Draco said, "Hydra," and the wall opened up.

A/N Alright I hope you liked it everyone! Incase you thought the Twins were just a little too mean for their age, remember they are a year above Tonks so they are 14 and in their 4th year, teenagers can be cruel don't forget that. Just so you know I have started to write the next chapter of Vampire's kiss! Sorry but my updates will become less and less frequent as I have less and less time to write, transferring to a different college really is a pain in the ass. No need to despair though, I have written through chapter 22 in this story so I have some chapters to fall back on.

## Chapter 18

Welcome Back  
Monday

Harry woke up late Monday morning, quickly showered, and ran to the Great Hall for breakfast. When he entered the Great Hall, he noticed that Tonks wasn't sitting with Draco at the Slytherin table. Instead she was sitting at the Gryffindor table with Granger and Neville.

"Hey." Harry said taking a seat next to Blaise

"You sleep in today?" Draco asked.

"Yeah," Harry said, wearily running his fingers through his hair. "Unintentionally and I'm glad I didn't miss Snape handing out our schedules."

"I would have to agree, Mr. Potter." Snape said. He had approached the two boys silently and now loomed over their heads.

"Morning sir." Draco said.

"Mr. Malfoy, Mr. Zabini, Mr. Potter here are your schedules for this year. Don't lose them as they will be your only copy. Here is yours Ms. Weasley." Snape said as he handed out the pieces of parchment.

Harry took one look at his schedule and moaned loudly.

"Is there a problem, Mr. Potter?" Snape asked icily.

"Umm...no sir, I'm just amazed at how many times we are stuck with the Gryffindors." Harry commented.

"Surely the Boy Who Lived can survive class with another house." Snape said condescendingly as he walked away.

"I hate him Draco," Harry said as he stared at the potion teachers back. "And I know he's your Godfather, but he's mental. We have

Potions, Defense, Transfiguration, and Herbology all with the bloody Gryffindors.” Harry said exasperatedly. “I could survive one class with them, but not four!”

”Yea we really got screwed over on the schedule this year.” Draco said agreeable.

”What do you have first today?” Ginny asked.

”Double Potions and Transfiguration with the Gryffindors.” Blaise said rolling his eyes.

”At least we’ll get to see Professor Snape take thirty points from that idiot Weasley and Longbottom.” Draco said with a grin.

”Draco, Neville isn’t that bad.” Harry said.

”I know you like Longbottom, Harry, but he’s barely more than a squib if you ask me.” Draco commented.

”Uh-huh. So Draco,” Harry said with a grin, “spoken to Parkinson lately? Merlin knows she can’t stop staring at you.”

The pale blond quickly looked down the Slytherin table and shuddered involuntarily when he saw Parkinson staring at him. “Bloody wench.” he muttered.

”Well I’m going to get to class.” Blaise said standing up.

”Yea we should go. Ginny what do you have first today?” Harry asked.

”Um...Charms.” Ginny said after checking her schedule.

”That’s a good class. Flitwick’s a great teacher, and he’s fair to everyone.” Harry said as they walked out of the Great Hall.

&&&

Tonks sat down at the Gryffindor table with Hermione.

"Hey Tonks. Why aren't you sitting over by the Slytherins?" Hermione asked curiously.

"Do I need an excuse to sit at the Gryffindor table?"

"Well considering the only times you've sat at the Gryffindor table are before Quidditch matches, the entrance and leaving feasts, or that time you and Potter had your fight. So yes, you do need an excuse." Hermione said.

"I just feel like sitting over here today." Tonks answered flatly.

Hermione shrugged her shoulders. "If you say so."

The two of them ate in silence for several minutes before Professor McGonagall walked over to them

"Ms. Tonks, Ms Granger here are you schedules." Professor McGonagall said briefly.

"Thanks professor." The two girls said together.

"So what's your schedule look like?" Tonks asked.

Hermione was about to answer when Ron Weasley screamed "bloody hell."

"I think Ron pretty much summed it up. I've got Double Potions, Transfiguration, Defense, and Herbology with the Slytherins. This is just great I get to deal with Potter in four classes this year. Two of which he is significantly better then me in." Hermione said in annoyance.

Tonks looked longingly over at the Slytherin table as Hermione spoke. "I'm sure it's not the end of the world." Tonks said absently.

"Easy for you to say, you haven't ever had Potter correct you in Transfiguration before." Hermione ranted. "He actually asked if I need tutoring from him last year! Can you believe that! Tutoring! Me! I was second in the class, but he treats me like I'm some helpless idiot. Oh

but of course Malfoy, Zabini, and the rest of the snakes can never do anything wrong, and does Professor McGonagall ever stop him, I don't think so." Hermione practically spat as she finished.

"Well if he's so bad, I would think that Professor McGonagall would stop him." Tonks put forth.

"No, she can't. Because even though he's a condescending bastard, he's still right about everything he says. It just makes me so mad, and Potter is nothing compared to what I've got to deal with in Potions. I mean you've got golden child Malfoy, who can't make a mistake in Snape's eyes, and even if I do my potion perfect, I still have to fight for an O from Snape." Hermione said.

"You said Harry was better than you in two classes?" Tonks asked.

"Defense. I don't know how. I don't think I saw him open the book all last year. Not that it mattered much with Qu...well you know our teacher last year. Hopefully Lockhart will be a credible teacher. I read his entire collection over the summer, and I must say that he seems very impressive." Hermione said.

"Are you still having nightmares about what happened when you went to get the stone?" Tonks asked quietly.

Hermione suddenly stood up and stared towards the door. "I think I should get to class" the bushy haired Gryffindor said quietly. "You know Snape will look for any reason to take points off." She then rushed off, tossing off a quick "Bye Tonks," as she left.  
Potions Classroom, Hogwarts

Harry and Draco took their normal spot right in front of the class as everyone filed into the room.

"Oiy Potter, Malfoy what did you do to my sister!" Ron Weasley yelled as soon as he entered the room.

"No clue what your talking about, Weasley. It's not our fault your sister actually has enough class to be in Slytherin." Draco commented.

"Everyone be quiet. Mr. Weasley, Mr. Longbottom five points each for not being seated at the start of class." Snape said striding out of his office.

"But sir..." Ron started.

"Another five for speaking without raising your hand, Weasley." The sallow potion teacher's eyes glittered as he spoke, practically daring the redhead to challenge him. Snape watched in amusement as Ron sat down hastily. "Now that Mister Weasley is seated we can begin. This year we will begin to explore anti-venoms. Now who can tell me what the Parisis Potion is?"

Draco, Harry, and Hermione's hands all went up quickly.

"Mr. Potter." Snape said.

"It's a Potion that will relieve paralysis from most Snake bites. However, it has no effect on many magical serpents, and it can actually inflict death if given to someone bit by one." Harry said.

"Good five points to Slytherin. Now who can tell me what will happen if someone without paralysis from a snake bite takes this potion?" Snape asked.

Again Harry, Draco, and Hermione's hands went up.

"Mr. Malfoy." Snape said.

"It will cause the drinker to become poisoned as it contains the venom of several poisonous snakes in it." Draco said.

"Excellent, Mr. Malfoy, 5 points to Slytherin. Now can anyone tell me what snake gives it's venom as the main ingredient." Snape asked.

Hermione was practically jumping out of her seat waving her hand.

"Mr. Weasley could you inform us?" Snape asked as he stared right at Hermione, who looked like she was going to explode.

"Errr...ugh a Runespoor?" Ron said weakly.

Snape rolled his eyes, "Twenty points from Gryffindor, Weasley. Not only do you not know the subject material, but you also can not seem to pay attention in class. As Mr. Potter already said, the potion has no effect on magical snake bites, Weasley. So why would the venom of a magical snake be present? Correct me if I'm wrong, but wouldn't that put the venom the potion couldn't help into the potion?"

"Sir the two most important serpents are the Egyptian Cobra and the Arizona Diamondback Rattlesnake, both snakes give exactl..." Hermione said.

"Ten points for speaking out in class Granger; however, she is correct. Both the Egyptian Cobra and the Arizona Diamondback must give exactly 5 ml of venom to the antidote to make it effective. You will spend the rest of the class working on this potion. Begin." Snape said as the potion's ingredients wrote themselves on the board.

"You want to brew while I prepare the ingredients?" Harry asked.

"Sounds good, this is a pretty simple potion, I doubt even Weasley and Longbottom could screw it up." Draco said loud enough for Ron to hear.

Harry and Draco spent the next hour brewing their Potion, and finished with five minutes to go in class. They quickly bottled the sample, and brought it up to professor Snape.

"Here is our sample, sir." Draco said handing him the vial.

Snape took the cork out of the vial and sniffed it. He also looked at the color for a moment. "Very good Draco. Ten points to Slytherin. I'd say you could have used a tiny bit more powdered Chicken's eggs, but full marks none the less." Snape said.

"Thank you sir, may we go?" Draco asked.

"No, I actually need to speak with you, Mr. Potter, and Mr. Zabini after class. You may return to your seats and read the text until after class." Snape said.

Harry and Draco returned back to their seats after informing Blaise that professor Snape wanted to talk to them. They spent the rest of the time trying to guess what their peers would get on their potions as they brought it up to professor Snape.

"A Galleon says that Granger gets full marks." Draco commented in annoyance as Hermione walked her potion up to professor Snape.

"No bet. Granger's too much of a perfectionist to screw such a simple potion up." Harry said as Snape reluctantly awarded Hermione full marks.

"Fine then. How about a Sickle that Weasley and Longbottom don't finish the potion at all." Draco said.

Harry turned around and saw Weasley frantically throwing things into his cauldron while Neville was stirring madly. "Deal, I say they finish it, but they fail." Harry said.

"Oh what are we betting on?" Blaise asked as he sat down at their station.

"Draco doesn't think that Weasley will finish in time. I said he would, but would still fail." Harry said.

"Hum that's a tough one." Blaise said as Professor Snape got up and began inspecting the potions that weren't completed.

When Snape reached Weasley and Longbottom's potion, he stopped and sneered. "What is this suppose to be?" Snape asked.

"The...umm...Parisis Potion." Ron ventured weakly.

"You are aware that the potion is supposed to be a light shade of blue are you not, Weasley? What color is your potion?" Snape spat.

"Orange sir." Ron said.

"Indeed." Snape said as he took out his wand and vanished the potion. "You and Longbottom will receive a zero for today's class."

"So who wins? Snape didn't give them a chance to finish and there is still two minutes left in class." Harry said.

"Push." Blaise commented.

"Agreed. So what do you think Snape wants to talk to us about?" Draco asked.

"Dunno. Can't be Quidditch since Blaise is with us. Unless you want to try out?" Harry asked.

"Me on a broom, not bloody likely." Blaise scoffed. "I'll be leaving the visits to the hospital wing to you and Draco."

"Come on Blaise, you really should think about joining. I mean Warrington is going to graduate next year." Draco said.

"Unless he pulls a Flint." Harry said.

"True." Draco said as the bell rang.

The three Slytherins waited until everyone walked out of class before they approached Professor Snape's desk. Draco was about to ask a question when Snape cut him off.

"You three have been requested by a teacher to take on the roll of a tutor outside of class because of your rankings on both the end of the year theoretical exam and practical class work." Snape said.

The three boys traded unhappy glances. "What would we have to do sir?" Blaise finally asked.

"Well that depends on the teacher, I know that professor Sinestra makes you spent two hours a week with students who are struggling outside of class." Snape said.

"I'm not sure if I'll have enough time to do that, sir. I'm already spending two hours twice a week with professors Flitwick and McGonagall, and when Quiddich starts, I'll be even busier." Harry said.

"Mr. Potter perhaps you should wait to find out what teacher's requested your help before you arrogantly deem it unworthy of your time." Snape retorted with a sneer.

Harry was about to give a detention worthy reply when Draco stepped on his foot.

"Sir, just who has requested our help." Draco asked politely.

"Mr. Malfoy, I have requested your assistance along with Professors Flitwick, McGonagall, and Lockhart. Now you can not be a tutor in more then two classes, and I will tell you that I do require a lot of my tutors. If you agree to tutor in Potions you will have to spend an hour a week with a student I assign you discussing theory as well as an additional hour a week helping them on their practical application." Snape said.

"Well I guess I'll tutor for Charms and Potions." Draco said.

"Very well. Mr. Potter I have asked for your services along with Professors Flitwick, McGonagall, Lockhart, Sinestra, and Sprout." Snape said.

"Since I already help out during Transfiguration and Charms I guess I'll do both of those." Harry said with a shrug.

Snape made a small mark on a piece of parchment before looking up and saying, "Mr. Zabini professors McGonagall, Flitwick, Sinestra, and Sprout have all asked for your assistance."

"I suppose Sinestra and Sprout since those were the classes I was first in Slytherin." Blaise said.

"Very well, here is a note for Professor McGonagall." Snape said handing them each a piece of paper as a group of fifth years sat down in the dungeons.

Harry, Draco, and Blaise quickly walked up to the Transfiguration wing to get to McGonagall's class. Even with a note they didn't want to be too late.

"So you were tops in Herbology and Astronomy, Blaise?" Harry asked.

"Yep I was second in our year in Herbology and third in Astronomy." Blaise replied.

"That's cool. I got second in Slytherin for both of those." Harry commented.

"Yeah well from that list of teachers who wanted you as a tutor, I'm not surprised." Blaise said.

"Yeah well I didn't want to tutor at all, but I don't think Snape would have let me live it down if I decided against it. I just hope Flitwick and McGonagall will let me count what I do in class as tutoring." Harry said as they reached McGonagall's classroom.

The three Slytherins opened the door causing McGonagall to purse her lips. She clearly was in the middle of an explanation of some sorts. The three boys handed her their notes and quickly took a seat near the back of the room.

"As I was saying, this year in Transfiguration we shall begin to transfigure larger animals. Now can anyone tell me why we gradually increase the size of the animals, and not just jump into transfiguring horses and elephants?" McGonagall asked.

Harry had to roll his eyes as Granger's hand rocketed into the air.

"Yes, Miss Granger." McGonagall said.

"It's because the more complex the animal the more difficult the transfiguration." Hermione said smugly.

"Correct. Five points to Gryffindor. By the end of this year, you should be able to turn a cat into a foot rest or a pillow without much difficulty. This year we will also..."

Harry just tuned out McGonagall and took out the book Defensive Transfigurations, which he had charmed to appear to look like his second year transfiguration book. Harry was fairly sure that he was close to an advanced third year as far as Transfiguration theory was concerned. Unfortunately, that made the entire second year transfiguration class essentially pointless for him, and reviewing the book would get boring. So Harry decided before he got to school that he would spend most of this year reading up on dueling with Transfiguration in class. Since McGonagall didn't care about what he did on non-practical or tests days, she wouldn't bother him as long as she saw he was reading the book.

Harry had read the first four chapters of Defensive Transfigurations, and he was almost giddy to begin reading chapter five. Dumbledore really was a genius as far as dueling strategy and incorporating transfiguration. Harry was amazed at how little McGonagall really taught as far as incorporating dueling into her subject. While Harry found turning cats into pillows fascinating, the simple spells Dumbledore used to turn any metal or stone into solid shield to block spells was far more impressive.

Harry took out his Transfiguration notebook and began to copy down several spells he wanted to learn by the end of the year.

Harry had nearly thirty spells written down when the bell rang and McGonagall said, "I want one foot of parchment on the theory of small mammal transfigurations for next class. Mr. Potter, Ms. Granger, Mr. Longbottom please stay after class."

Harry said goodbye to Blaise and Draco and waited after with Granger and Neville.

"Ms. Granger, Mr. Longbottom I have to congratulate you both for being requested as a tutor by an instructor." Professor McGonagall said.

"Really! Oh wow this is so amazing, Professor. What classes can I tutor in? How much time do I have to give up?" Granger asked quickly.

"Who would want me to be a tutor?" Neville asked in shock.

"Don't sell yourself short, Neville. You're really good in Herbology; I bet it was Sprout who wanted you as a tutor." Harry said still sitting in his seat.

"Mr. Potter is correct, Mr. Longbottom. Professor Sprout said you were one of the finest Herbology students she has ever had. Now if you wish to be a tutor in Herbology you will meet twice a week to help out a struggling first year. Do you want to take on this responsibility?" Professor McGonagall asked.

"Er...well I guess. I do like Herbology." Neville said hesitantly.

"Very good. I'll inform professor Sprout." McGonagall said as she made a mark on a piece of paper.

"Now Ms. Granger you placed in the top ten in your year for all your classes. Every professor on staff has asked for you to be a tutor. Now you can only tutor in two classes so you must choose which classes you would prefer to tutor students in." McGonagall asked.

"Um well if I can only choose two I'd have to say...Transfiguration and Charms." Hermione said.

"Ohh no." Harry grumbled at little too loud.

"Something you would like to say, Mr. Potter?" McGonagall asked her tone turning cold instantly.

"Oh no, Professor." Harry said reluctantly.

"Well Ms. Granger I should tell you that as a Transfiguration tutor you will spend two hours a week with a first year student." McGonagall said.

"Ma'am I wanted to ask a question about that." Harry said getting up.

"Yes, Mr. Potter?" McGonagall asked.

"Er well I was wondering if I could just tutor during class like I've been doing." Harry said.

"Mr. Potter this tutoring is very different and is more personal then what you provide for you classmates during class time." McGonagall said as Harry deflated.

"Very well, ma'am." Harry said.

"I take it that you will be tutoring in Transfiguration and Charms as well, Mr. Potter." McGonagall said.

"Yes ma'am." Harry replied.

"Good I was hoping that you would choose that. Tell me is young Mr. Malfoy tutoring in transfiguration as well?" McGonagall asked.

"Er no ma'am Potions and Charms." Harry said.

"Pity, I was hoping to have him as a tutor along with you and Ms. Granger. Now Mr. Potter I will see you tomorrow at six thirty for your first private lesson. Give this note to Madam Pince and read over the selected material for our lesson. You may leave now. I need a private word with Mr. Longbottom and Ms. Granger." McGonagall said as she handed him a note.

Harry accepted the note, nodded his head, and quickly left the room. The second he was outside he saw Draco and Blaise grinning madly at him.

"She didn't take your excuse did she?" Blaise asked with a smile.

"No, it looks like I'm stuck tutoring." Harry grumbled.

"Suck it up Harry, I'm sure they won't make you do much when Quiddich starts, and they see how busy you are." Draco said.

"Hopefully." Harry mumbled.  
Tuesday, Great Hall, Hogwarts.

Harry, Draco, Blaise, and Ginny sat at the Slytherin table for breakfast.

"What's up with Tonks?" Harry asked as he eyed his best friend again sitting with the mudblood over at the Gryffindor table.

"No clue." Draco said.

"Maybe we should go talk to her?" Harry put forth.

"I guess we could, you didn't...you know make her mad at you again did you?" Draco asked curiously.

"No, Draco I didn't." Harry answered flatly.

"Well I guess we should go talk to her. I mean we can't have her just sitting over by the mudblood can we?" Draco asked as Ginny gasped in shock.

"What is it, Ginny? Did you choke on something?" Draco asked.

"No you...you just said the M word." Ginny said in shock.

"So?" Harry asked.

"Yeah, so what?" Draco asked dismissively.

"So what? That's like a really big insult. Dad would ground me for all summer if he heard me say that." Ginny said.

Harry and Draco just rolled their eyes. "Ginny it's just a word." Harry said.

"But it's a really horrible thing to call someone, Harry." Ginny said as several Slytherins started to look at her like she had two heads.

Ginny slowly began to notice that everyone was gawking at her like she was crazy. A rather large blush started to form around her neck and face. "I-I...Um well isn't it wrong?" Ginny asked weakly.

"I guess that depends who you ask." Blaise put forth.

"What do you mean?" Ginny asked.

"Well if you're for extending the rights of muggleborns, then you consider it a horrendous slur that demonstrates ignorance. If you are a more traditionalist pureblood, then all that word does is demonstrate your beliefs that muggleborns are corrupting our gene pool." Blaise said evenly.

"What do you think?" Ginny asked Blaise.

Blaise just shrugged his shoulders indifferently.

"Ah, the legendary Zabini neutrality at its finest." Draco said as several people laughed.

"So you don't really have an opinion? What about you Harry?" Ginny asked hesitantly.

"I'm not one for the whole blood purity thing, but I do use the word." Harry said.

"R-really? But if you don't care about blood purity why do you use it?" Ginny asked astonished.

"Well I don't like muggleborns, and until someone comes up with a new word to insult them. I'm pretty much stuck with what's already available." Harry said nonchalantly.

"You don't like muggleborns?" Ginny asked in shock.

"Nope can't stand Muggle's either." Harry said shrugging his shoulders.

"Wow, I-I would have thought that growing up with Muggle's would have made you like them." Ginny said.

Harry's face darkened quickly at the inadvertent mention of the Dursley's. "Yes, well you would be wrong." Harry said far harsher then he intended.

Ginny reeled back like she had been struck. She had never seen Harry look so cruel before. "I-I'm sorry if I upset you, Harry." Ginny said quickly.

"No you don't need to apologize, Ginny. Harry is just taking out some frustration on you for no good reason." Draco said staring Harry down.

Harry's anger deflated instantly. "Yeah I'm sorry, Ginny, Draco's right. I shouldn't have taken anything out on you. You didn't know that I hate my relatives."

"Er well its ok. Let's just forget it then. I'm going to be late to Lockhart's class anyway." Ginny said deciding a subject change was necessary.

"Yeah you have to tell us about him at lunch. We have him after Herbology." Draco said pleasantly.

"Ok sounds good." Ginny said smiling.

"Well I guess we had better be going also, Greenhouse four is pretty far." Harry commented.

"Yeah I agree, bye Ginny," Draco said getting up.

"Yeah see you later." Blaise said.

"Bye guys see you at lunch." Ginny said smiling.

Harry, Draco, and Blaise made it to greenhouse four a few minutes later. They were rather happy that the Gryffindors, with the exception of Neville, had yet to show up.

"Ah well I guess class is about to start. Thank you for your help, Mr. Longbottom." Sprout said with a smile.

The room quickly filled up with students from both houses. When the enchanted bell rang, Professor Sprout smiled and stood up from behind her desk. "Welcome to second year Herbology. This year we will be working in groups of two. Now in an attempt to promote house unity, I ask that each group be comprised of a Gryffindor and Slytherin."

"What! You expect us to work with them." Draco said loudly.

"Five points for speaking out of term, Mr. Malfoy, and yes I do. Now I will give you all two minutes to find a partner on your own before I select one for you." Sprout said as she waved her wand and a magical clock appeared counting down from 120 seconds.

At the one minute mark, no one from either Gryffindor or Slytherin made any attempt to move. Harry slowly started to have very paranoid thoughts about Sprout pairing him with Weasley or Granger. Deciding that he was not going to spend a whole year in Herbology with one of them, Harry quickly stood up and walked over to where Neville and Hermione were seated.

Harry could tell everyone was watching him as he approached their table. He didn't care though, the thought of working with Weasley or The-Know-It-All was incredible motivation. "Er...Neville, do you want to be my partner this year?" Harry asked.

Neville looked around and saw every single person in the classroom was watching him. His face paled, but he nodded his head in the affirmative.

"Excellent, Ms. Granger please pick up your things, and let Mr. Potter take your seat." Sprout said flashing a smile to Harry.

The clock hit zero and Sprout eyed the rest of the students in annoyance. "Very well then, you give me no choice. Goyle you are partnered with Thomas. Zabini with Finnegan. Nott with Weasley. Malfoy with Granger..." Sprout said.

"NO!" Draco yelled out in horror as Harry struggled to contain his laughter.

"I'm not exactly thrilled about it either, Malfoy." Granger said as she sat down next to him.

Harry was now turning purple from suppressing his laughter. When Draco glared at him, Harry lost all control and started to laugh hysterically.

"Is something funny, Mr. Potter?" Sprout asked.

It took Harry a few seconds to regain his composure, but when he did, he just smiled and said, "No ma'am."

"Very well. This year we shall begin our study of Mandrakes now can anyone tell me what the properties a Mandrake conta..." Sprout lectured.

An hour and thirty minutes later, Harry left the Greenhouse with Blaise and a very angry Draco.

"I can't believe I got stuck with Granger." Draco said.

"Yeah well you could have gotten up and asked someone." Harry said.

"Oh whatever Harry." Draco said rolling his eyes.

"Hey why do you think I did it? We have six guys in Slytherin and Gryffindor only has four that meant there was a chance that Sprout could have paired me with Granger or Weasley. Thanks but no thanks." Harry said.

Draco was about to retort when someone tapped Harry on the shoulder. Harry turned around and was surprised to see Neville looking very uncomfortable. "Er...c-can I talk to you, H-Harry?" Neville asked.

"Go away Longbottom." Draco said dismissively.

Neville started to sputter an apology when Harry cut him off. "No don't apologize Neville, its fine. Draco, save me a seat at lunch." Harry said.

"Fine." Draco said rolling his eyes.

When Draco and Blaise were out of ear shot, Harry turned to Neville. "Ok what's up, Neville?" Harry asked.

"Er...I was just um w-wondering h-how you did in Herbology last year." Neville asked hesitantly.

Harry was taken aback by such a random question. How I did in Herbology? Does he think I won't be able to pull my weight? "I got an O, and I was seventh in our year, why?" Harry asked.

"R-really?" Neville said clearly astonished.

"Yeah. Why?" Harry asked.

"Oh it's nothing, Harry. It is just that some people mentioned that you might...um...that you...might only want to work with me because...um well you see it's really stupid." Neville said .

Harry slowly began to piece together what the problem was. "So some idiotic Gryffindors told you that I only wanted to be partners with you because you were really good at Herbology." Harry said simply.

Neville just nodded sheepishly.

"Well, I did want to be partnered with you because I knew you were really good at Herbology." Harry said. When Neville looked very hurt, Harry quickly added, "But that's not the only reason. Truthfully if I had to be partnered with a Gryffindor it would be you. I mean I can't stand

any of the other ones. I mean can you imagine what would happen if I were paired with Granger or Weasley. Merlin, I think I'd end up killing one of them."

"Yeah, I can see that not working out." Neville said with a grin.

Harry smiled at the shy Gryffindor. "So are we good then?" Harry asked.

"Umm...yeah, Harry, I think we are. Actually, I wanted to ask you something else though if that is ok." Neville said quickly.

Harry had to withhold a smirk. "Really Neville you don't have to ask my permission to ask me something." Harry said.

"Um...right sorry I forgot. I was just wondering if you wouldn't mind...well that is to say if you had the spare time...Ok well you see..." Neville said blushing.

"Neville please just spit it out." Harry said with only a hint of annoyance.

"Ok well you see after you left McGonagall's classroom yesterday she told me that I should get a tutor for Transfiguration. McGonagall said that because of where my...er...skill level was that it would probably have to be either you or Hermione. When Hermione heard, she got all excited and started talking about making up study schedules and all this other stuff. She told me last night that she would be going over every assignment I turn in...it was um...overwhelming me too much, so I said I was going to ask you. So do you think you-er...would you mind tutoring me?" Neville asked quickly.

Neville's question shocked Harry. "No I wouldn't mind," The Boy Who Lived quickly answered, "and I can understand why you wouldn't want Granger to be your tutor. My schedule is really busy though, so how about we meet tomorrow for two hours before curfew this week. We can figure out a regular time to meet after that." Harry said.

"Ok, no problem. Where do you want to meet?" Neville asked quickly.

"Library should work. If we need to work on some practical stuff, I'll ask McGonagall about using an empty classroom." Harry said.

"Thanks Harry, I really appreciate this." Neville said.

"No problem, I just wish I could have been there when you told Granger you wanted me as a tutor and not her." Harry said as he shook Neville hand.

Great Hall, Hogwarts

Harry entered the Great Hall to find lunch in full swing. He took a seat next to Ginny and across from Draco and Blaise. "Hey." Harry said cheerfully.

"What did the Squib want?" Draco drawled as he put a piece of chicken on his plate.

"Oh I'm going to tutor him in Transfiguration." Harry said.

"Good luck with that." Draco said barking a laugh.

"Hey I'd taking tutoring Neville two hours a week over an hour and half working with Granger." Harry said causing Draco to turn a nasty shade of red.

"I always hated Herbology." Draco said in annoyance.

"But Draco now you get to hear about how useful every little thing is from Granger." Harry said with a nasty grin.

Draco just grumbled before turning to Ginny and asking, "So how was Lockhart?"

"He is the worst teacher ever. He actually made us take a test on the first day." Ginny said in annoyance.

"Well that's not uncommon. A lot of teachers like to see if you've read the books or not." Blaise said.

"No well the test was all about him. Like what is Gilderoy Lockhart's favorite color? What does Gilderoy Lockhart consider his greatest accomplishment?" Ginny said.

"You have to be kidding me?" Harry asked in shock.

"Nope." Ginny said.

"Something tells me I'm going to hate Tuesday's this year." Draco said shaking his head.

&&&

"Ok, so what's got you so mad?" Tonks asked as Hermione sat down with a huff.

"Malfoy." Hermione replied shortly.

Tonks was unable to keep the grin off her face. "Ah so what did he do?"

"He's my Herbology partner." Hermione said shaking her head.

"Ha are you serious? Why?" Tonks asked as she desperately tried to suppress a grin.

"Sprout's idea to promote inter-house unity." Hermione said.

"Bloody Hufflepuffs. Well Draco isn't that bad." Tonks said.

"He spent the entire class mumbling mudblood under his breath." Hermione said in annoyance.

"Ah well..." Tonks said.

"Hey Hermione I need to talk to you." Neville said sitting down.

"Oh hi, Neville. I was just going to find you before Defense to go over our study schedule." Hermione said with a grin.

"Um Hermione I told you last night that I would be asking Harry also." Neville said hesitantly.

"Yes, yes, yes well I'm just being prepared for when he turns you down, insults you, or has no proper schedule prepared." Hermione said.

"Hermione, Harry's not like that." Tonks said with some bite to her voice.

"I know you like him Tonks, but to every other Gryffindor he's a terror." Hermione said dismissively.

Tonks just glared at Hermione. She was about to say something to defend Harry when Neville said, "Actually H-Hermione, he agreed to tutor me."

"What! Well surely you didn't accept. I mean sure Potter's good at Transfiguration, but it's all natural. He doesn't have to work for anything." Hermione said sharply.

"Hermione that's not true, Harry has two, two hour sessions with McGonagall every week to hone his ability." Tonks said quickly.

"Yes well what I meant is that it comes easier for him. So he probably won't have a clue how to help Neville, who is clearly lost." Hermione said not noticing the glare Neville was sending her.

"Well I'm going to be working with Harry. If I don't improve, I'm sure McGonagall will have me switch to you." Neville said as he got up and walked away, leaving a stunned Hermione.

"I can't believe he chose Potter over me." Hermione huffed.

Tonks just rolled her eyes. Hermione was a good friend, but she could be a handful sometimes.

Defense against the Dark Arts Classroom, Hogwarts

Harry, Draco, and Blaise entered Lockhart's room and moaned. The walls of the classroom were covered in large pictures of the man grinning or shaking hands with some famous person.

"Now I know I'm going to hate Tuesdays." Draco said under his breath.

"Ah Harry, Mr. Malfoy welcome. Please take a seat." Lockhart said as he exited his office and strode into the room.

Harry, Draco, and Blaise all took seats in the back row of the classroom. Harry noticed that for once they weren't the first group of students in the class. Every girl from both houses seemed to have put house grudges aside and was sitting in the first two rows of seats. When the rest of Slytherin and Gryffindor arrived, Lockhart cleared his throat.

"Welcome to your first Defense against the Dark Arts class. I am your new teacher Gilderoy Lockhart. Now I'm sure most of you have heard of me so I won't list all my various awards, accomplishments, and achievements. However, I will say that I look forward to winning Witch Weekly's most charming smile award for the sixth time this coming January." Lockhart said flashing a smile.

Harry, Blaise, and Draco all rolled their eyes in disgust.

"Now before we start of the year, I'm going to administer a small pre-test to see how far you've read in my books." Lockhart said as he began handing out pieces of parchment.

When the tests got to Harry, Blaise, and Draco, they all groaned loudly. It was the exact same test that Ginny had mentioned to them. At first Harry actually wrote down some answers that he knew, but halfway through the test, he got fed up and started to write the most obscure things he could think of. Harry heard Blaise and Draco snickering as they filed out their own tests, and assumed they were doing the same.

When Lockhart summoned the tests, he smiled brightly at them. "Good now that that is out of the way, it is time to begin our lesson.

Everyone wanders out, the creatures I am going to introduce you too today are among the most fierce and menacing on the planet.” Lockhart said as he lifted a cage with a blue cover over it. The cage shook and rattled slightly causing Harry, Draco, and Blaise to raise their eyes in shock.

”He wouldn’t bring anything dangerous would he? I mean he’s clearly an idiot, but he wouldn’t...” Draco asked

”Cornish Pixies!” Lockhart exclaimed as he took the cover off revealing several small blue creatures with wings.

Harry, Draco, and Blaise laughed very loudly.

”You think it’s funny do you? Well let’s see how you handle them.” Lockhart said as he opened the cage door.

Harry, Draco, and Blaise immediately stopped laughing when thirty pixies flew out of the cage and began to terrorize the classroom. Several of the pixies began picking up books and tossing them out the window while others attacked students or dive-bombed Lockhart.

”Bloody idiot.” Draco said as he pointed his wand and said, ”Expelliarmus.” The disarming spell rocketed off towards a group of pixies throwing them in different directions. This however only seemed to annoy the Pixies, who decided to focus their attention on Harry, Draco, and Blaise.

”Well I’ll leave you all to take care of this, good luck.” Lockhart said as he raced into his office and closed the door.

”Coward.” Harry yelled as a group of pixies flipped over Lockhart’s desk.

”Harry, think of something.” Blaise yelled as Pixies tried to grab his wand

”What do you want me to do, Blaise?” Harry asked.

"I don't know...ah get away from me. Expelliarmus." Draco screamed as several pixies grabbed his platinum blond hair.

"Diffindo, Diffindo, Diffindo." Harry shouted slashing his wand at a cluster of pixies who were trying to untie a chandelier. The cutting curse decapitated three pixies at once as well as maimed several others causing them to fall to the ground in moans of pain.

"Cutting curse." Harry yelled to Draco and Blaise.

Soon the three Slytherin boys sent a hail of cutting curses into the air, slicing the pixies apart.

"Stop it!" Hermione yelled in shock as a Pixie lost its head right in front of her.

"You got a better idea, Granger? Incendio!" Harry roared as he sent a jet of fire at a group of pixie's causing the little creatures to let out horrendous screams."

"Stop it, Potter! You're killing them! Stop it! Expelliarmus!" Hermione yelled pointing her wand at Harry.

Harry dodged the disarming spell and sent one right back, throwing Hermione into a wall.

"Damn Slytherin!" Ron yelled as he lunged at Harry from where he was hiding under his desk.

Harry skillfully dodged the attacking Gryffindor. A second later, Draco and Blaise hit Weasley with a disarming and cutting spell throwing him against the back wall with a bleeding cut above his eye.

"Let's finish the Pixies and get out of here." Harry said to Draco.

"Good idea." Draco said.

"Diffindo!" Harry, Draco, and Blaise shouted at the last group of Pixies. All of the annoying creatures let out a shriek of pain as legs, arms,

heads, and wings were cut off. The ones that were still alive fell to the floor twitching.

"Well I say we leave Lockhart to clean this mess up." Draco drawled.

"Agreed." Harry and Blaise said.

"Wait! You can't just kill these poor creatures and leave!" Hermione shrieked as all the Slytherins got up to leave behind Draco, Harry, and Blaise.

"Watch us." Draco said as he opened the door and stepped outside.  
Professor McGonagall's Classroom 6:15 pm. Hogwarts.

Harry knocked on the door to professor McGonagall's office for his first private lesson of the year.

"Come in." McGonagall said.

Harry opened the door and stepped inside. "Hello professor." Harry said brightly.

"Hello, Mr. Potter. How have your two days worth of classes been?" McGonagall asked pleasantly.

"Well, Transfiguration was excellent of course." Harry said causing McGonagall to roll her eyes.

"Well I should hope so. What exactly were you reading in your text book that was so interesting by the way?" McGonagall asked.

"Switching Spells." Harry said using his carefully prepared lie.

"Really? Why? You mastered that a while back." McGonagall asked.

"Well I was just thinking about adapting it for a less obvious usage." Harry said cryptically.

"Such as?" McGonagall asked.

"Well say you are involved in a duel. In front of you is a trashcan, but a few feet away is a large wooden door. Someone sends a curse at you, but the doorway is too far to summon in time to block it. I thought that perhaps a switching spell could be used to switch the doorway with the trashcan to block the spell." Harry commented.

"I see," McGonagall said trying to hide her shock, "and why would you be in a duel in the first place, Mr. Potter?"

"Well last year I had to face off with Centaurs, Quirrell, the person who confounded me, the troll at Halloween, and all the Gryffindors who tried to curse me after I beat them at Quidditch." Harry said ticking them off on his fingers. "I just want to be prepared."

"Yes, well hopefully this year will be significantly less dangerous. So besides my class how are your other classes?" McGonagall asked peering over her glasses.

Harry's curiosity was now slightly peaked. McGonagall rarely asked the same question twice regardless of the answer Harry gave her. "Well Herbology was good. Neville and I are partners and I've agreed to tutor him in Transfiguration." Harry said.

McGonagall's stern look softened. "Ah well that is good news, Mr. Potter. I do hope you are able to reach Mr. Longbottom and help him to improve. Now how about your other classes?" McGonagall asked.

"Professor, is there something you would like to ask me about my other classes?" Harry asked looking his teaching right in the eye.

"What do you mean, Mr. Potter?" McGonagall said.

"Professor you have never asked me the same question three times in a row before. So clearly you want to talk about something that happened in one of my classes." Harry said logically.

"Yes, well Ms. Granger came to me with some disturbing news about you, Mr. Malfoy, and Mr. Zabini slaughtering Pixies in Professor Lockhart's class. I went to speak to Professor Lockhart about it, but he claims to have not seen anything of the sort. As I didn't believe Ms.

Granger to be lying, I was curious to hear what you had to say.” McGonagall said.

”Well it’s true. When Professor Lockhart released the Pixies and no one could figure out how to stop them, Draco, Blaise, and I used the cutting curse. The reason Lockhart didn’t see it is because he fled the room as soon as he lost control of the Pixies.” Harry said nonchalantly.

”Mr. Potter surely a bright student such as yourself could have used less lethal means to contain a group of Pixies.” McGonagall said exasperatedly.

”I’m sure that I could have as well, but you see when Lockhart released the thirty pixies into the room it was pure chaos. I did what had to be done.” Harry said shrugging his shoulders.

”They were still living beings, Mr. Potter.” McGonagall replied.

”Yes and so are Lethifolds and Dragons but that doesn’t mean we don’t do what we have to do to contain them.” Harry answered back firmly but politely.

McGonagall looked like she wanted to argue the difference between Lethifolds and Pixies, but instead she just moved onto business with a sad expression on her face. “Here is your theory test. This year I want to move at a similar pace as we did last year. I fully expect you to be up to the beginning of fourth year as far as practical and theoretical transfiguration by the end of the year. Now in order to reach that goal, you will need to work very hard, Mr. Potter.” McGonagall said as she handed him a parchment

”Yes ma’am I’ll do my best.” Harry said.

”Good, now we will meet every Tuesday and Thursday evening this year. Does that work with your schedule?” McGonagall asked.

”Er well I have no idea when professor Flitwick wants to meet or when Quidditch practice will be.” Harry admitted.

"Filius has already informed me that he wants to meet with you every Monday and Friday. We both have already informed Severus of this so hopefully he will relay it to Mr. Flint." McGonagall said.

Harry nodded his head, took out a quill, and began to take McGonagall's theory test. Twenty minutes later, McGonagall called time, and Harry handed over his test.

"This is good work although you could be more detailed in some parts; however, for the first test back from summer it's better than what I expected." McGonagall said.

Harry had to seriously fight the urge to tell her that the reason he was vague was because he had to pretend like he didn't already know the more advanced theory, and that he was several chapters ahead of where he should have been in The Big Book of Transfiguration.

Harry spent the rest of the lesson working on turning a raven into a goblet. Harry of course managed to do it without a problem and eventually had a very beautiful black goblet with a green serpent on it. He smirked when McGonagall picked it up only to drop it when the snake raced around the Goblet and hissed at her.

"I see you've begun working on animation with Filius. Tell me did you animate this after you created the Goblet or at the same time?" McGonagall asked after she composed herself.

"Er after. I'm still not sure how to animate and transfigure at the same time. Professor Flitwick mentioned that we would work on it this year though." Harry said.

"I see, well until you can do it all in one transformation don't animate anything yet." McGonagall said.

"Yes ma'am." Harry said.

As the lesson came to a close McGonagall handed Harry a small folded note. "Harry give this to Madam Pince. It is the next section of The Big Book of Transfiguration I want you to read." McGonagall said.

"Ok...um, Professor McGonagall can I ask a question about The Big Book of Transfiguration?" Harry asked.

McGonagall looked at Harry over her spectacles causing him to shiver slightly. "You may." McGonagall said.

"Well I was told over the summer that the book actually contained a large list of spells for each section of theory. Why don't I read the spells as well as the theory? I mean if they go together it can only help, right?" Harry asked.

"Who exactly told you this?" McGonagall asked narrowing her eyes.

"What does it matter? Is it true?" Harry asked darkening his tone slightly. He honestly wanted to know why his professor didn't feel that he could do the spells the book recommended. Since he was already reading the Animagus section nightly as well as making a small list of spells to try, Harry figured asking his teacher might help him stay away from some of the more dangerous spells Lucius mentioned.

"I don't know who told you that Mr. Potter, but they are mistaken. Besides theory that book does not contain anything that you should be concerning yourself with." McGonagall said.

Harry felt hurt that one of his favorite teachers would so blatantly lie to him, but he put on a face he hoped looked like indifference and said, "Ok, professor. I was just wondering."

Wednesday, Great Hall, Hogwarts

Harry sat with Draco, Blaise, and Ginny at the Slytherin table for breakfast, and for the third straight day Tonks sat with the Gryffindors.

"Ok what's the deal? Has anyone spoken to Tonks?" Harry asked.

"No, I saw her leaving the library yesterday, but we didn't get the chance to talk." Blaise said.

"Are you sure you didn't do anything to make her mad at you, Harry?" Draco asked.

"Yes, at least I can't think of anything she would be mad at me for." Harry said.

"Well that's reassuring." Draco drawled.

"Oh come on, I think I would know if I made her upset about something. How about you? "Did you say anything stupid?" Harry asked Draco.

"No, I never do." Draco said.

Harry and Blaise snorted in disbelief.

"What? I'm a Malfoy we don't say stupid things." Draco said arrogantly.

"Sure Draco." Harry said sarcastically.

"Name one time when I said something stupid." Draco said challengingly.

"Ok how about last year when you told professor Sprout that you didn't want to do the assignment because you didn't want to get your hands dirty." Harry said.

"So, that's a legitimate reason." Draco drawled.

"No Draco it's really not. I mean it is Herbology you tend to get dirty working with plants." Ginny said with a grin.

Draco just rolled his eyes. "I still say it was a good reason."

"Sure Draco." Harry said patting him on the shoulder condescendingly.

"Cut out it out, Harry. This is about what you said to make Tonks mad at you not me." Draco said.

"For the last time, I didn't do anything to make Tonks mad at me." Harry said exasperatedly.

"Fine, if that's the case, go talk to her. You've got five minutes till History of Magic." Blaise said checking his watch.

"Alright I'll go talk to her. If I'm not there when class starts tell Binns...tell him I was challenged to an honor duel or something." Harry said.

"An Honor duel? Really Harry you're not even trying anymore with your excuses." Blaise said.

"Well as long as he keeps accepting them why should I?" Harry asked.

"Good point. I still can't believe that he believed that you were involved in an altercation with the Giant Squid last year." Draco said.

"You actually told him that? And he believed you?" Ginny asked in shock.

"Yeah, but I think the worst lie we told him to get out of class had to be when Draco raised his hand and said that he broke his leg. Binns told him that he could go to the hospital wing, and Draco proceeded to walk out of class like nothing was wrong. I don't think I stopped laughing for a week after that." Harry said with a grin.

As Ginny cracked up laughing, Blaise turned to Harry and said, "No more stalling, Harry, go talk to Tonks."

"I'm going, I'm going." Harry said as he stood up and started to walk over to the Gryffindor table. Tonks was sitting with her back to the Slytherins so he tapped her on the shoulder to get her attention.

"Hey Harry what are you doing here?" Tonks asked.

"Can we talk?" Harry asked.

"Sure what is it?" Tonks asked moving over for him to sit down.

"Not here, do you have a class this morning?" Harry asked.

"No I'm off till after lunch, I had Astronomy late last night." Tonks said.

"Ok well do you think we can go for a walk by the lake?" Harry asked.

"You don't have class?" Tonks asked getting up from the table.

"I've been challenged to an honor duel and won't be able to attend History of Magic." Harry said as they walked out of the hall.

"Oh my, what an unfortunate time for a duel to take place. I'm sure Binns will be distraught." Tonks said with a grin.

"I'm sure." Harry said.

The two of them walked in silence for a few minutes till they got outside. When Harry was sure that no one was close enough to overhear them, he turned to Tonks. "Did I do something to make you upset, Tonks?" Harry asked.

Tonks was caught completely off guard by the question and didn't answer. Harry took her silence though as a confirmation of his fears. "Whatever I did, I'm sorry. I mean I don't want you to be upset with me, Tonks. I just don't know what I did." Harry said.

"Harry I'm not upset with you." Tonks said recovering.

"You're not?" Harry asked.

"No why would you think that I am?" Tonks asked.

"Well you haven't spoken to Draco, Blaise, and I since the train. I mean you eat all your meals over with the Gryffindors, and you avoid us like the plague." Harry said.

"I-I don't avoid you like the plague, Harry." Tonks said defensively.

"Tonks clearly something is wrong. I mean you have never spent that much time away from us except for when we were fighting last year.

So if you're not mad at me are you mad at Draco or Blaise?" Harry asked.

"No Harry, I'm not mad at you guys." Tonks said.

"Then what's the problem." Harry asked.

"Why do you care?" Tonks asked her eyes moistening.

Harry stopped walking. "What do you mean why do I care? You're my friend." Harry said.

"Why? You guys don't need me anymore." Tonks said weakly.

"Wait just a minute, what the bloody hell are you talking about Tonks? Why wouldn't you think that we need you?" Harry asked.

"Weasley!" Tonks said in annoyance "You have that stupid Weasley now! Why do you need me?"

"Ginny? You don't think we need you because of Ginny." Harry said in disbelief. "Are you kidding me?"

He started to laugh. However, laughing only seemed to make Tonks feel worse and she started to cry.

Harry immediately stopped laughing. "Don't cry Tonks." Harry whispered. "Please...just please stop crying."

"H-Harry it's just not fair. I mean she's in Slytherin while I'm stuck in Gryffindor. She can be at your table without getting stared at by everyone. She can be in your common room..." Tonks said.

"Tonks please don't do this. Don't be jealous that Ginny is a Slytherin and you're a Gryffindor. I mean sure Ginny's a Slytherin, but that doesn't mean I care about her more than you. I mean you know if I had to choose between you two it would be you in a heartbeat right?" Harry said.

"Y-you would?" Tonks asked teary eyed.

"Yes, I wouldn't even have to think about it. I'm sure Draco and Blaise feel the same way." Harry said.

"Thanks, I-I guess this whole thing is kind of stupid." Tonks said as she pushed away some tears.

"Come on Tonks did you really think that we would abandon you for a Weasley?" Harry asked with a grin.

"I just overreacted. I mean her brothers have been nothing but arseholes to me, but everyone else loves them, and then I see you and Draco all friendly with her and then she got sorted into Slytherin. I thought that you would all think she was...I don't know better than me because she was in Slytherin. I really freaked out didn't I?" Tonks said.

"Yes, yes you did, but don't worry about it. So what do you want to do now? I've got," Harry checked his watch, "an hour until History of Magic is over, and I think my duel would probably take up the entire lesson." Harry said with a grin.

"I don't know, Harry. You are a very gifted wizard." Tonks said with a grin.

"True, perhaps I defeated my opponent, and spent the rest of the time celebrating my victory." Harry said with a grin.

"Now that sounds far more believable." Tonks said smiling fully now.

"So what have you been up to with the know it all? I'm sure it has been loads of fun." Harry said sarcastically.

Tonks glared at Harry, but then smirked. "Yes I love hearing over and over again why Neville is making the biggest mistake of his life choosing you over her as a tutor." Tonks said with a grin.

"Ha, oh yes I'm sure. Did you hear that Draco and her are partners in Herbology?" Harry asked.

"Yes, I can't believe it. I wonder who's going to snap and try to kill the other first? Draco was apparently really getting underneath her skin when he was muttering mudblood all last class." Tonks said.

"Is that what he was saying? I was too far away, but I saw him talking to himself." Harry said with a huge smile.

"Yeah, it takes a lot to get Hermione rattled, but somehow you two have managed to drive her insane in two days." Tonks said with a smile.

"Why do you like her so much, Tonks? I mean, I don't want to get into an argument with you or anything. I'm just curious." Harry said.

"Harry, I-it's just that Hermione reminded me a lot of me. You know she didn't have a lot of friends last year, and when the twins started to pick on her around Halloween it was like déjà vu for me. I wasn't going to let her go through the same thing I did, and well she's really not that bad Harry. If you could just see her for who she is and not a muggleborn." Tonks said.

"Tonks, I know who Granger is. She's an uppity know it all, who thinks she is smarter then the rest of us. Believe me I may have started to dislike her because she's a mudblood, but I have a lot more reasons to dislike her now." Harry said.

"She told me that you were the one who convinced her parents to let her come back though." Tonks said.

Harry glared at Tonks. "Please don't bring that up ever again, Tonks."

"Do you regret it?" Tonks asked.

"Yes and no. I know her leaving would have made you upset, so I'm sort of glad that she's back, but an even bigger part of me thinks that it was a massive and stupid mistake." Harry said.

"You...you thought her leaving would make me upset? Is that why you...did what you did?" Tonks asked hesitantly.

"Yes." Harry said bluntly.

"Thanks Harry." Tonks said as she used her metamorphmagus powers to contain her blush.

Harry was oblivious to Tonks internal struggle though and simply said, "It's nothing. Can we please change the subject though?"

"Yeah, no problem. Um can I ask you a question?" Tonks said.

"Is it about Granger?" Harry asked.

"No." Tonks replied.

"Then sure." Harry said.

"Why Weasley?" Tonks asked.

"You know at first it was just a joke. But at some point over the summer Draco and I noticed she wasn't like the other Weasleys. All of her letters were about how much she fought with her entire family. How she hated Percy's pompous rules are everything attitude, and how Ron and her mother babied her. But for me I think the minute I stopped seeing her as a tool to use against her brothers was when she wrote about how much the twins were pranking her for defending me. She wrote me a massive letter, Tonks, and I mean massive. It had to be at least two and a half feet of parchment, and all it contained was a huge account of her week. Basically from the moment she woke up to the moment she went back to sleep the twins had taken it upon themselves to torturing her with muggle pranks. All I could think about was how similar you and her were. I mean think about what she grew up in, Tonks. The only brothers that are close to her age are complete arses. Her family is dirt poor and can't afford anything because her father is a muggle loving fool, and she is treated like a child. Did you know that she wasn't even going to get her own wand? When I found out I took her to Ollivander's and bought it for her myself. Then when her idiot brother found out, he tried to snap it!" Harry said.

Tonks face had grown progressively paler as Harry continued to talk. Oh Merlin that poor girl. I thought I had it bad, but to actually grow up and spend every day in the same house with the twins! How is she not insane! "Who t-ried to snap her wand?" Tonks asked weakly.

"Ron." Harry practically spit.

"I guess I should try to get to know her. I mean if you, Draco, and Blaise are going to be friends with her, I should be too." Tonks said.

"You don't have to be her friend, Tonks. I wouldn't want you to make me be Granger's friend, so believe me; I'm not going to force you to hang out with her." Harry said.

"Thanks Harry, but I think I should probably get to know her." Tonks said.

Library 6:00pm, Hogwarts

Harry walked into the Library and found Neville sitting at a table far away from every other student.

"Hey Neville." Harry said as he sat down.

"H-hi Harry." Neville said blushing.

"Alright so today I figured we'd spend the first forty minutes or so writing our essays for McGonagall. When you are done, I'll look it over and give some pointers." Harry said as he took out a quill and a piece of parchment.

"Ok sounds good." Neville said as he took out his own parchment and quill.

Thirty minutes later everything was going fine until Neville stood up to use the loo. He had taken one step away from the table when he tripped and fell into the table causing his ink to spill and completely cover his essay.

"Oh no." Neville moaned.

"Don't worry about it." Harry said as he took his wand out. "Aufero macula."

The ink recently spilled ink covering Neville's parchment disappeared; however, the words for the essay remained.

"Wow, what spell was that?" Neville asked in shock.

"It's a household cleaning charm Flitwick showed me last year. Basically it removes any fresh stain. If you use it quick enough after spilling ink on parchment, it will just remove the recently spilled ink and not the words." Harry said.

"What is the incantation, again?" Neville asked as he took out another quill.

"Aufero macula." Harry said as he demonstrated the wand movement for Neville.

"Ok got it. Thanks Harry this will probably save my life this year." Neville said sincerely.

"No problem Neville, do you still need time to work on your essay?" Harry asked.

"No, you can look at it, I've only got a few closing lines left anyway." Neville said as he got up to go to the loo.

Harry nodded and took Neville's essay. It took him a good two minutes to decipher Neville's handwriting, but once he did, Harry found that Neville's essay wasn't all that bad. When Neville came back, Harry put his essay down.

"Well it's actually not that bad. I'd say I would have given it between an Acceptable and an Exceeds Expectations." Harry said.

"R-really?" Neville asked in shock.

"Yea my only real critique is that you don't seem to have a strong grasp on the theory. You just sort of talk around it a lot." Harry said.

"Er what do you mean?" Neville asked.

"Ok Neville you say that Transfiguring a mammal is a lot harder than an inanimate object, but why is it harder? You should talk about how a mammal is a complex organism. Here look at my essay." Harry said handing Neville his essay.

Neville read the essay for a few minutes before handing it back. "Er wow Harry that was very thorough. I mean I had no idea that you needed to focus on the creature's anatomy to transfigure it." Neville said astonished.

"Well you don't really have to focus on it, Neville. It's more like you need to be aware of it. When you are transfiguring a pin or a match you need to be aware of its basic shape structure that kind of thing. The same is true for an animal. You need to be aware of its basic anatomy. Does it have gills or lungs, two legs, four legs, six legs, or eight? Just really basic stuff, Neville." Harry said.

"Ok I understand so if I want to say transfigure a cat into a footrest like McGonagall said, I would have to know that the cat has four legs a tail and that the footrest has four legs and a cushion." Neville said.

"Well you'll probably have to have a much clearer mental picture of the cushion you want to transfigure the cat into, but yes you have the basics." Harry said.

Neville spent the next twenty minutes re-writing his essay, but when it was finished it was tremendously better.

"This is really good, Neville." Harry said

"Really. W-What do you think I'll get on the essay?" Neville asked hesitantly.

"I'd say you'll probably get an O on this essay. McGonagall might be tempted to dock some points here and there, but overall the structure is good and you make all of the necessary points." Harry said.

"R-really an O you've got to be kidding me." Neville said astonished.

"No, it's a really well written essay you should be proud." Harry said handing it back to Neville who took it reverently.

"I've never gotten an O on an essay in Transfiguration before." Neville said in shock.

"Well I'm not promising, Neville, but I think you have a good shot. Believe me you won't get anything below an E." Harry said.

"Thanks Harry, this is great." Neville said with a grin as Ginny walked over to their table.

"Hi Harry." Ginny said.

"Ginny what's up what are you doing here?" Harry asked.

"Oh Tonks asked to meet me here. Have you seen her?" Ginny asked.

Harry was about to respond when Tonks walked over and said, "There you are, Ginny. Hey Harry, Neville what are you two up to?"

"Oh we...er that is to say...Harry's being nice enough to...um well I guess it's sort of like..." Neville said.

"I'm helping Neville out in Transfiguration." Harry said simply.

"Oh well good choice, Neville, Harry's a genius at the stuff." Tonks said.

"Yea he is." Neville agreed.

"Ok Ginny let's go grab another table so we don't bother them while they work." Tonks said.

"Ok sounds good, bye Harry. Nice to meet you Neville." Ginny said as she and Tonks sat down a few table over.

"So what's up Tonks why did you want to talk to me?" Ginny asked.

"Oh well um, I kind of wanted to apologize to you." Tonks admitted.

"Apologize? Oh don't worry about the train. You had just gotten into a fight with my brothers. I understand you probably didn't want to see another Weasley." Ginny said brushing it off.

"Er well I also wanted to apologize for something else." Tonks said. When she noticed how completely confused Ginny looked Tonks said, "I didn't give you a chance. I kind of resented the fact that you were friends with Harry, Draco, and Blaise. I was jealous that you were in Slytherin, and that you'd get to spend more time with them than me."

Ginny was floored. "Is that the reason you were avoiding Draco, Harry, and Blaise? Me?" She asked weakly.

"Yes, I-I was scared that they'd pick you over me like everyone in my year picked the twins over me. I mean your brothers tortured me my entire first year. Before I met Harry, I didn't have a single friend because everyone thought it was fun to pick on me. So when I saw Harry, Draco, and Blaise being all friendly with a Weasley, I freaked out. I just saw them as choosing a Weasley over me and that really scared me." Tonks said hanging her head.

"I-I'm sorry. I didn't know. I mean I know how mean the twins can be, but I swear I-I would never make fun of you, or try to make Harry, Draco, or Blaise dislike you." Ginny said quickly.

"I know. Harry talked to me earlier today about it, and I spent the rest of the day building up the courage to talk to you. I just want you to know that I'd like to try to get over my Weasley phobia and be your friend." Tonks said.

Ginny grinned. "I'd like that. Besides, no one hates the twins and Ron more than me. Let me tell you what they did to me over the summer." Ginny said.

An hour and a half later an annoyed Madam Pince had to shoo Ginny and Tonks out of the closing Library. The two of them had spent the

time talking about everything the twins, Ron, and Percy had ever done to make their lives horrible. While Ginny's list of grievances was far longer as she had lived with them for a number of years, Tonks' list contained far crueller acts against her as she wasn't family. Regardless of who was wronged more by the male Weasleys, the two girls left the library that night with the start of a good friendship.

Thursday, Great Hall, Hogwarts

For the first time since they returned to Hogwarts, Tonks sat with the Slytherins at breakfast.

"Hey Tonks. Did you and Harry fix whatever problem you were having?" Draco asked as he sat down.

"Draco, Harry and I weren't in a fight." Tonks said rolling her eyes.

"Really? I guess I owe Harry a sickle." Blaise said reaching into his pocket and tossing Harry a silver coin.

"So if you weren't mad with Harry what was the problem?" Draco asked.

"It's nothing, Draco." Tonks said.

"Are you sure?" Blaise asked.

"Yes, please just drop it." Tonks said.

"Ok no problem. So how was tutoring the squib last night, Harry?" Draco asked.

Before Harry could answer, Ginny blurted out a question. "There's a squib at Hogwarts? How?"

Draco just smiled. "Well Ginny you see Neville Longbottom is about as close to a Squib you can get and still have something resembling a magical core. I still haven't been able to figure out how he even got a letter to come here." Draco said with a grin.

"Really? He seemed so nice." Ginny said.

"He's not really a Squib, Ginny. Draco just doesn't like Neville." Harry said evenly as he took a sip of pumpkin juice.

"Oh ok. I get it." Ginny said with a grin.

"I'd take whatever Harry says with a grain of salt, Ginny. You don't want to become friends with the Gryffindors. They are all mindless fools, well except for Tonks, but she's more a Slytherin than a Gryffindor anyway." Draco said.

"Why thank you Draco." Tonks said smiling.

"Anytime." Draco said with a grin.

"So what class do you guys have today?" Tonks asked.

"Astronomy." Harry said.

"What about you Ginny?" Tonks asked.

"Transfiguration and then Potions." Ginny said.

"Ah good luck with McGonagall, she's tough, but if you are having any problems I'm sure Harry will help you out." Tonks said with a grin causing Harry to roll his eyes.

"I'm sure Ginny will do fine. If you do need any help just ask Draco or me." Harry said.

"Thanks. How's potions? Ginny asked.

"Ha you're a Slytherin. You'll do great." Tonks said with a grin.

"Yeah just make sure you glance over the book before you go into class, and don't melt your cauldron." Harry said with a grin.

"If you need any help, I'll work with you. I was tops in Potions last year." Draco said pompously.

"Don't brag, Draco you'll sound like Percy." Ginny said.

Draco feigned being sick before he said, "I swear I'll never brag again."

"I'm sure." Tonks said sarcastically.

"How about you Tonks what do you have?" Blaise asked.

"Defense. Hermione said that Lockhart was a good teacher, but..." Tonks started.

"Is she mad?" Harry asked.

"The man's a menace." Blaise said.

"A completed waste of air." Draco drawled.

"He is really bad, Tonks." Ginny said honestly.

"I was about to say that everyone else says he's rubbish." Tonks said with a grin.

"Yeah rubbish is the understatement of the century." Blaise said rolling his eyes.

"Really that bad? I heard you guys butchered a bunch of pixies that actually sounds like fun." Tonks said grinning.

"I'll admit that looking back it was fun, especially when Weasley was stupid enough to try to tackle Harry. We cursed him so bad." Draco said with a grin.

"Ugh, Ron is such an idiot." Ginny said rolling her eyes.

Harry was about to respond when a large imperial Golden Owl swooped down and landed directly in front of him. The owl offered its leg, and Harry noticed a scroll wrapped around it. Harry untied the scroll, but the Owl just stayed on the table.

"Whose it from?" Draco asked staring at the massive bird.

Harry opened the scroll.

Dear Mr. Potter,

This letter has been charmed so that only you may read it. Also your coordinates at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry have been given to this Owl as to avoid certain parties from intercepting this letter.

Below are the available dates for your civil case to have Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore removed as your Wizard Guardian. Please mark the date you wish with a drop of blood and return the scroll to the Owl which delivered it.

September 17th

September 29th

October 16th

October 31st

November 22nd

Sincerely

Rightstick

PERSONAL ASSISTANT TO HIS HIGH LORD HORIK

"Wow." Harry said.

"What is it?" Tonks asked.

"Oh Draco you know that thing I talked to your dad about when we left Gringotts?" Harry asked.

Draco looked at him curiously for a second before his eyes widened.  
"It's about that?" Draco asked.

"Yeah. Do you think your dad would want a specific date for the you know what?" Harry asked.

"Er I dunno. We really should Owl him." Draco said.

"Draco that will take forever besides Owls can be intercepted. Andi"  
Harry said.

Harry's house elf appeared with a pop next to him causing several Slytherins to gasp in shock.

"How may Andi serve master, Harry?" Andi asked smiling wildly.

"Draco do you have a piece of parchment?" Harry asked.

"Yeah, here you go." Draco said handing him the parchment and a quill.

Harry quickly wrote a note.

Dear Lucius,

The Goblins want to know what day I want to set for the case against my guardian. Here are the dates is there one you think I should select?

September 17th

September 29th

October 16th

October 31st

November 22nd

HP

"Ok Andi, take this to Lucius...er Mr. Malfoy. Tell him it's urgent. Make sure he reads it and wait for an answer." Harry said handing his elf the note.

"Yes sir, Andi will do as master Harry says." Andi said as she disappeared with a pop.

"Ok Harry what was that about?" Tonks asked curiously.

"I'll explain later, Tonks. Please just trust me, the less people who know the better right now." Harry said.

"Harry I'm sure we can tell her." Draco said.

"In the middle of the Great Hall when everyone is looking at us? Oh yes that would be smart." Harry drawled.

"Er well I didn't mean now." Draco said sheepishly.

"Sure." Harry said.

"Mr. Potter what is that bird doing sitting on the Slytherin table?"

Harry turned around to see an annoyed looking Severus Snape walking towards him.

"Sorry sir, but the bird will have to stay until I send a reply." Harry said.

"So send a blasted reply and get it out of here. Your classmates are trying to eat." Snape said menacingly.

"Sorry sir, but they will have to put up with it for a little while longer." Harry said.

"Oh why's that?" Snape practically spat.

"Because we have to wait for a reply from father." Draco said jumping into the conversation.

Snape eyed Draco curiously for a moment. "What does your father have to do with this?" Snape asked.

"Well I kind of need his advice before making a decision." Harry replied.

"Are you so helpless that you have to bother competent people with every little thing, Potter?" Snape said darkly.

"No sir." Harry said narrowing his eyes.

"Well then how about you man up and make your own decision." Snape said now drawing the entire attention of the entire Great Hall.

"Because this decision will effect Mr. Malfoy as well, and I wanted to clear it with him first." Harry said.

"Do you have any idea how long a response will take? I will not have that blasted bird following you around all day waiting for an answer, Potter." Snape said as Andi popped back into the Great Hall.

"Here is Mister Malfoy's response master Harry sir." Andi said handing Harry the note.

"Potter you're forcing Hogwarts elves to be your personal owls! Detention for one month!" Snape decreed.

"Actually sir, Andi is my personal elf. If you'll look closely, you'll see she has the Potter crest on her robes." Harry said.

"Up now Potter, you can't bring your own elf to Hogwarts." Snape said as he grabbed Harry's collar and pulled him.

"Sir, actually you can. Father passed a bill through the board of Governors allowing the personal elf's of students to reside in the castle. As long as the elf isn't called during class, the student is allowed to have them." Draco said jumping to Harry's defense.

Snape eyed the two before he quickly turned around and walked up to the head table. Harry watched with glee as Snape's face turned a

deep shade of purple when Dumbledore began to speak with him. Eventually Snape just nodded and swept out of the Great Hall, his robes billowing behind him.

"Well that was fun." Harry said sarcastically.

"Harry the note." Draco said pointing to where Andi was standing.

"Oh yeah. Andi the note, if you please." Harry said.

Andi handed the note over to Harry and said, "Will Master Harry be needing anything else?"

"Stay for a moment longer, Andi. I'm not sure if I'll need to send a reply." Harry said as he opened the note.

Harry

October 31st would be the best time for the hearing. Every case that day is before the entire Wizengamot as it is the fall equinox. I believe it could do Dumbledore a serious political blow to be shown as a poor Guardian. We could use that momentum along with your presence, and support to stop Macmillan's Muggleborn Education Reform Bill. If you have a problem with that date, then October the 16th

LLM

"Draco why does your dad sign his notes LLM?" Harry asked.

"Lord Lucius Malfoy." Draco replied.

"Ah, you're going to have to explain that whole Lord thing to me a little later. I was going to ask this summer when Lord Macmillan was being a royal pain, but it slipped my mind." Harry said as he flipped the parchment over and wrote, 'That would be great. Thank you.'

"Andi take this back to Lucius. After you deliver it, you may return to doing what you were previously." Harry said handing her the note.

"Yes master Harry sir." Andi said before disappearing with a pop.

Harry picked up his Gringotts letter and looked it over again. Blood. Why is it always blood? Harry thought as he placed the letter on the table and took a knife. He carefully pricked one of his fingers until a small amount of blood was on the tip. Harry then dropped the blood on the date October 31st. The second the blood touched the scroll, it rolled itself up and the large golden Owl snatched it with it's talon before taking off.

"Ok well I've got class, Harry, but I want to know exactly what that was all about later today." Tonks said getting up.

"Ok, enjoy Lockhart." Harry said.

Tonks just rolled her eyes and walked away.

"I've got class also, so I guess I'll talk to you lot later." Ginny said as she followed Tonks out of the Great Hall.

"So what was that about?" Draco asked quietly.

"Let's just say this Halloween is going to be interesting this year." Harry said with a grin.

"Huh? Ohhhh that's when it's all going down huh? Wait you're going to do it on the 31st that's the equinox the entire Wizengamot will be there!" Draco exclaimed.

"Draco! Keep it down. Besides your father wants to kill two birds with one stone." Harry hissed.

"Ok Harry you're going to have to explain this later because you aren't making much sense." Draco said.

"Sure he is, you just don't listen well, Draco. Potter is clearly bringing something before the Wizengamot on the Equinox along with your father. They clearly have two things they want to accomplish, and you seem to know one of them." Blaise said quietly.

"Has anyone ever told you that you are a little too perceptive, Blaise?" Harry hissed.

"Yes actually." Blaise said with a grin.

Harry could only roll his eyes.

&&&

Harry had never been as antsy as he was during Astronomy. He spent the entire lesson going over the positives and negatives about telling his secret to Blaise and Ginny. While he would have no problem trusting them with the information, neither of them had any Occulmency training. While Draco and Tonks' training wasn't the best, they still had enough mental walls to know when their mind was being breached. Dumbledore also probably knew that Harry would tell them about his usage of Legilimens. With that in mind, Harry figured that Dumbledore and Snape might stay out of their minds as they didn't want to end up on the wrong side of the Board of Governors.

When the bell rang, Harry, Blaise, and Draco left the classroom and headed to the Library where they met up with Tonks and Ginny. Harry led them to the same secluded table where he worked with Neville.

"Ok Harry spill." Tonks said.

"First I need to know how your Occulmency is going?" Harry asked.

"Working on my 7th wall." Tonks said.

"Working on my 6th." Draco said.

Harry looked at Ginny and Blaise. Ginny just looked confused while Blaise looked smug.

"I didn't know I needed Occulmency to be friends with the Great Harry Potter, but I've got 4 walls completed." Blaise said with a grin.

Harry just stared at him in shock. "You do?" Harry asked.

"Please you can't be neutral in pureblood society without protecting your mind." Blaise said.

"Er what's Occulmency?" Ginny asked.

"Defense of the mind. It's a way to detect someone who is trying to use Legilimens on you." Harry explained.

"Legilimens?" Ginny asked again.

"Legilimens is a way to read someone's mind, Ginny. I know of at least two people at this school who can do it. One of whom does it frequently." Harry said.

"Who?" Ginny asked horrified at the thought.

"Snape and Dumbledore." Harry said.

"No! I mean I could see Snape, but Dumbledore reads people's minds." Ginny asked in shock.

"Those are the two who have tried to read my mind." Harry said.

"Tried?" Ginny asked.

"I have a way of blocking their attacks on my mind. I'm working on Occulmency as well too keep them out." Harry said.

"How's your Occulmency Harry?" Draco asked.

"Working on number eleven, but I'm going to be so busy I don't know when I'm going to find the time to work on it. Salazar keeps pestering me about it." Harry said mumbling the last part.

"Ginny I'm sorry, but I can't tell you this secret until you have at least some Occulmency. Draco, Blaise, Tonks, and I will help you with it, but you probably won't find out about this until after it's over." Harry said.

Ginny looked like she wanted to argue, but the prospect of being tutored in Occulmency made her simply nod her head in acceptance. "Ok I guess I'll do some homework at another table while you talk then." Ginny said with only a hint of disappointment in her voice.

"Alright, bye Ginny." Harry said.

"Later Ginny." Blaise said.

"I'll join you when we're done." Tonks said.

"Me too." Draco added as Ginny picked up her stuff and walked to another table.

"Ok what's going on Harry?" Tonks asked.

"Well when Draco and I went to Gringotts this summer, they called me to speak with the Director." Harry said.

"Again?" Tonks said astonished.

"What do you mean again? You've meet with the director of Gringotts more then once?" Blaise asked astonished.

"Well yeah, twice actually." Harry said.

"Ok so what did he want?" Tonks asked.

"Well do you remember why they wanted to talk to me in the first place?" Harry asked.

Tonks scrunched up her face like she was really focusing, but eventually shook her head. "Sorry no I forgot." She admitted.

"There was a fraud committed against my account. Someone had been intercepting my banks statements and keeping my financial information from me." Harry said.

"Oh that's right the Goblin said it was a level 9 fraud or something right?" Tonks asked.

"Exactly, well when we went back this time, the Goblins explained that they had completed their investigation, and they figured out who was responsible." Harry said.

"Well who was it?" Blaise asked his eyes wide as saucers.

"Dumbledore." Harry said simply.

"No." Tonks and Blaise said together in shock.

"Yep, he is apparently my Magical Guardian. He used that title along with being the Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot to get my monthly bank statements transferred to the ministry where he picked them up before they got to me." Harry said.

"I don't believe it. I mean after everything you told us last year about him, I still hoped he was alright. I mean mum does nothing but sing his praises." Tonks said shaking her head.

"Yes well hopefully less people will sing his praises when I have him removed as my magical guardian in front of the entire Wizengamot." Harry said.

"Merlin, Harry this is going to be huge. I mean no offense. I know you don't like your fame that much, but to the wizarding world you are the boy who lived. If you go head to head against Dumbledore, its going to be...it'll be.... I mean the press alone will be all over this. I wouldn't be surprised if every paper in the world picks up the story on the front page." Blaise said.

"I don't really care; all I want to do is get him removed." Harry said.

"Wait you said something about killing two birds with one stone. What were you talking about?" Tonks asked.

"Well Lucius wants to have the case in front of the entire Wizengamot so that Dumbledore will look bad and so that I can say that Lord Macmillan's Muggle Re-Education Bill is a waste of Galleons." Harry said.

"So you are really going to go against Lord Macmillan, wow. You sure like to make enemies, Harry." Blaise said.

"Ok can someone explain the whole lord thing?" Harry asked.

"Ok Harry the Wizengamot consists of three main groups. The first group is the ten ancient families in Brittan. They are Black, Bones, Diggory, Gryffindor, Hufflepuff, Longbottom, Macmillan, Potter, Ravenclaw, and Slytherin. The next group are old pureblood families with the title of Lord, Lady, or Barron. Lordship is a title which goes to a family for service to either England or the Wizarding world in general." Draco said.

"So what's the difference between a Lord and a Baron?" Harry asked.

"The title of Baron is for families who want to have a say in the Wizengamot, but haven't done anything to merit Lordship. A good example of this is the Parkenson family. Their family has a lot of money, but no one has done anything to earn the title of Lord. In order to get a seat in the Wizengamot, they had to donated a lot of gold to the ministry in exchange for the title of Baron." Blaise said.

"So basically they bought their way into the Wizengamot?" Tonks asked.

"Pretty much." Blaise said indifferently.

"How many Lord's and Baron's are there?" Harry asked.

"Ah good question. As of right now, I think there are around seventy or eighty Lords and Barons." Blaise said.

"Is that a lot?" Tonks asked.

"Yes that's just over half the Wizengamot." Draco said.

"So who makes up the rest of the Wizengamot?" Harry asked.

"Well there are always seventy five open Wizengamot seats that anyone regardless of bloodline can be nominated for, but usually it's an influential ministry employee, someone rich, or someone with a close personal tie to a powerful Lord or Baron that is nominated. To be accepted into the Wizengamot, you only need to be nominated by another Wizengamot member, and approved by half the Wizengamot. That's one of the reasons why politics in the Wizengamot is so fierce. The traditionalist purebloods and the reformists are constantly fighting each other for open seats and legislative control. Right now the reformists, who are led by Dumbledore, have about five more members with six or seven moderates leaning towards their camp. The traditionalists really don't have anyone leading them officially, but I think it's safe to say that Mr. Malfoy is probably one of the strongest silent leaders along with Baron Nott." Blaise said.

"Ok that makes sense I guess. So what happens if you are a Lord for two families?" Harry asked curiously.

"Well then you'd have two votes." Draco said with a grin.

"But that's really rare. There hasn't been someone with two votes in over three generations." Blaise said eyeing Harry suspiciously.

"Alright well if that's all, I'm going to go work with Ginny." Tonks said.

"Yeah I've got some stuff to do also." Draco said as the two of them got up.

"Well I guess I can do that Transfiguration essay." Blaise said still eyeing Harry suspiciously.

"Well I'm going to go back to the common room to work on some Occulmency before I have to meet up with McGonagall later." Harry said as he stood up, said bye to everyone, and left the library.  
Transfiguration Room, Hogwarts

Harry walked into professor McGonagall's classroom and took a seat. A few moments later, McGonagall entered the room.

"Ah Mr. Potter, excellent you are right on time." McGonagall said.

It wasn't a question so Harry just stayed quiet. He was still a little tired from working on his Occulmency.

"Are you alright, Mr. Potter? You seem a little tired." McGonagall asked.

"Yes ma'am I'm ok." Harry admitted.

"Well do your best to stay awake, Mr. Potter. By the way, how was your first tutoring session with Mr. Longbottom?" McGonagall asked.

"It was good. We worked on his essay for most of it. I think you'll be pleasantly surprised by it." Harry said.

"Well I look forward to reading it then." McGonagall said as she handed Harry a theory test.

Harry just nodded his head and accepted the test. Twenty five minutes later, he put down his Quill and handed it over to McGonagall.

McGonagall scanned his answers for a few minutes before nodding her head and putting the test down. "Well Mr. Potter today we shall be working on Transfiguring a Quill into a book. Now so far you have only transfigured larger objects into smaller ones, or objects of about equal size. It is significantly harder to transfigure smaller objects into larger ones. You will need to master this as it is the first step to conjuring." McGonagall explained.

Harry just nodded his head and accepted a large group of Quills from McGonagall. He placed them on a desk in front of him, flicked his wand, and watched as the quill expanded into a book. Unfortunately, the book was only a few inches larger than the height of the Quill and was covered in black feathers.

"Concentrate, Mr. Potter." McGonagall said.

Harry put his wand down on the table and spent a minute thinking about a book. When he had a clear picture of the book he wanted the

Quill to turn into in his head, he flicked his wand again. This time the Quill changed into the book Advanced Charm Theory.

"Excellent job, Mr. Potter, now try to turn the Quill into a book you haven't ever seen before." McGonagall said.

Harry nodded his head and proceeded to turn the Quills into several books of varying size. Harry played around with the cover of the books making them more original as he continued. He had just transfigured a book which he titled, Ten Easy Ways to Slaughter Gryffindor at Quidditch when McGonagall told him it was time to stop. Harry nodded his head and handed her his last book, which she quickly transfigured back into a Quill.

Friday, Charms Classroom, Hogwarts.

Harry entered his last class of the week with a large grin on his face. After the class, Harry, Draco, Ginny, Tonks, Susan, and Blaise were all going out to the Quidditch pitch to play a three on three game of Quidditch. Harry wasn't sure what he was looking forward to more seeing Blaise on a broom or the game itself.

"So looking forward to the game, Blaise?" Harry asked with a grin.

"Shut up Potter." Blaise mumbled.

"You know you don't have to play, Blaise." Draco said with a smirk.

"Ah but what would Susan say, Draco? I mean she is trying out for the Hufflepuff team." Harry said.

Blaise just mumbled an insult under his breath causing both Harry and Draco to laugh out loud. Most of the room was looking at them and Harry caught the eye of the little Asian girl, Su Li. However, as soon as the girl looked at him, she quickly averted her gaze.

"So that's the Li girl?" Draco asked quietly.

"Yeah that's her." Harry said.

"Something I should know?" Blaise asked.

"Nothing much, Blaise. Draco and I are just going to talk to Su Li after class." Harry said.

Blaise was about to ask why when Flitwick entered the room and all the chatter died down.

"Hello everyone." Flitwick said with a bright smile.

"Hello Professor." All the students said together.

"Welcome to your first second year charms lesson." Flitwick said with a wild grin. "This year we will begin to study the art of animation. Now can anyone tell me what that is?" Flitwick asked.

Draco raised his hand along with a few Ravenclaws.

"Yes, Mr. Malfoy." Flitwick called.

"Animation is the process of using charms to cause an inanimate object to become active in some way." Draco said.

"Yes that is a very broad definition but essentially correct. Five points to Slytherin. Does anyone else have an idea what animation is?" Flitwick asked.

When only Terry Boot's hand was still up, Flitwick pointed to him.

"Sir, animation is the ability to charm any object, three dimensional or two dimensional to perform a life like action." Terry Boot said.

"Excellent Terry five points to Ravenclaw. Now Mr. Potter do you think you could help me with a brief demonstration on animation?" Flitwick asked with a grin.

Harry arched an eyebrow, Flitwick never had him help in demonstrations before, but Harry got up and walked to the front of the room.

"Excellent, now do you remember that little animation battle we had last year?" Flitwick asked.

"With the soldiers, sir?" Harry asked.

"Yes exactly. Now we will be using these instead of small plastic soldiers." Flitwick said as he summoned two one foot tall toy soldiers. Harry instantly recognized them as a toy Dudley had begged his father for several years ago. They were some sort of SAS commando dolls.

"Now this is a little larger then the last thing you animated, but I'm sure you can handle it." Flitwick said as he pointed his wand at the doll and said, "Animatus."

Harry did the same thing with his toy soldier. As soon as the spell connected, the soldier's shoulders seemed to slump and Harry grinned.

"Now the animation spell is very difficult magic as you need to maintain strict mental focus to control the thing you are attempting to animate." Flitwick said as he made his soldier drop into a fighting stance and throw several punches.

Harry mocked Flitwick's soldier, but had his soldier perform a series of kicks.

"Now Mr. Potter and I are going to have a short fight with our soldiers, please get someplace you can see." Flitwick said.

While Flitwick was addressing the class, Harry was thinking of anyway he could defeat his professor. Every time they had squared off in an animation battle, Harry had been beaten quick and embarrassingly. Harry began looking at his soldier and noticed that he had several small knives strapped to his chest. Harry grinned as he quickly came up with a plan to finally beat his favorite teacher.

"Does everyone have a good view of my desk?" Flitwick asked.

When everyone nodded that they could indeed see, Flitwick turned to Harry. "Shall we have them bow before we begin?" Flitwick asked.

"Sure." Harry said as his soldier bowed.

As soon as they rose out of their bow, Flitwick's soldier attacked by charging right at Harry's soldier. Harry had his soldier jump and throw a kick to Flitwick's soldier's head. Flitwick seemed to anticipate this though as his soldier ducked and rolled under Harry's.

The fight soon intensified when Flitwick's soldier began to assault Harry's soldier with a series of punches and kicks to the face and sternum. Harry was starting to get embarrassed; his soldier was really taking a pounding. Flitwick's soldier dropped to the ground and tripped Harry's soldier knocking him to the ground. As soon as Harry's soldier fell backwards, Flitwick's soldier climbed on top of him and began to relentlessly punching him in the face.

As the class started to cheer, Flitwick's soldier proceeded to beat Harry's to a pulp. Harry felt his stomach churn. This was exactly what Piers and Dudley use to do to him. Feeling a sudden rage he had never felt towards Flitwick, Harry mentally commanded his soldier to draw his longest knife.

Harry watched in glee as his soldier immediately complied and drew a dagger like object from his belt. When Flitwick's soldier leaned in to strike again, Harry's soldier pushed his knife forward and drove it right through Flitwick's soldier's neck. The entire class gasped when they saw the end of the dagger sticking out of the back of Flitwick's soldier's neck. Flitwick clearly was also stunned as his soldier stopped moving completely.

Harry used this to his advantage, and had his soldier push Flitwick's soldier off him. Once Harry's soldier had full maneuverability, Harry commanded it to relentlessly stab Flitwick's soldier. His soldier immediately complied and before Flitwick could figure out what happened, Harry's soldier had removed the head of Flitwick's soldier.

Harry grinned as his soldier held up the head to the class like a trophy before throwing it off the desk.

"Well...that was something, Mr. Potter." Flitwick said slightly shocked.

"Thank you sir." Harry said still trying to force away the memory of getting beating up by his fat cousin and his friends.

"Well everyone take your seats." Flitwick said.

Harry walked back to his seat and took out his copy of Advanced Charm Theory. As Flitwick lectured about animation, Harry tried to read; however, he could not completely get the picture of his soldier being beaten up while all his classmates cheered out of his head. As the class came to a close, Harry made a mental promise to never allow himself to be in that kind of position again. He would show everyone that he wasn't someone to be pushed around, not anymore.

When the bell rang, Harry stood up and was halfway out of the door when someone touched his shoulder. He spun around quickly with his wand drawn.

"Hey chill out Harry." Draco said as he looked at the wand that was pressed firmly between his eyes.

Harry sheepishly withdrew his wand. "Hey Draco what is it?"

"Aren't we going to talk to Li?" Draco asked.

"Oh yea, sure let's go do that." Harry said as he and Draco made their way over to where the petite Ravenclaw girl was packing up her things.

"Hey you're Su right?" Draco asked when they were close enough.

The small Asian girl stopped packing her things and looked up at them with wide eyes.

"Draco Malfoy." Draco said extending his hand.

Su seemed to study Draco's hand for a good minute before she took it and shook it.

"Harry Potter." Harry said pleasantly extending his own hand, which she shook far quicker than Draco's.

"S-S-Su L-Li. W-W-What d-do y-you w-w-w-want?" Su stammered out in a heavy Chinese accent.

Harry just smiled at the girl, clearly making her even more uncomfortable. "Sorry we just wanted to talk to you. Do you have time now or do you have another class?" Harry asked.

"I-I-I have Herbology now." Su said.

"Oh we'll walk you out there we were going to go flying after class anyway and the greenhouse is on its way to the pitch." Draco said.

"Yeah good idea. Hey Blaise do you think you can grab Draco and my brooms?" Harry yelled across the room.

"Yeah sure." Blaise grumbled as he walked out of the room.

"So Su your really good at Charms why don't you ever say anything in class?" Harry asked as the three of them left the room.

"Y-Y-You d-d-don't s-s-say a-anything either H-Harry." Su said weakly.

"I know, but that's because I already know all this stuff. While I guess it would be nice to take 40 house points a class from Flitwick, I'd rather just read. Is that why you don't raise your hand because you know all the stuff already?" Harry asked.

"I-I know some of it, but I-I couldn't have done what you did today." Su said quietly.

"You'll be able to do it eventually, I'm sure. Harry is just awesome at Charms and Transfiguration." Draco said.

The three of them walked outside without saying a word. When they approached Greenhouse 4, Harry said, "Well Su I guess we'll see you later."

"Um yea ok." Su said as she ran into the greenhouse.

"That girl is really strange, Harry." Draco said.

"Yeah no kidding." Harry said as they made their way over to the Quidditch pitch.

When Harry and Draco made it to the Quidditch pitch, they found a rather strange sight. Blaise was pacing back and forth in front of three brooms while Ginny and Tonks attempted to calm him down.

"Hey Blaise, what's wrong?" Harry asked.

The sound of Harry's voice caused the three people to look up in shock. "Potter I don't want to do this." Blaise said quickly.

"Oh come on Blaise, it's to help Susan remember." Draco said.

"I know that, but I'm not going to be much help if I keep falling off my broom." Blaise shot back.

"Blaise you're playing keeper relax. You aren't going to be racing all over the pitch or trying to hit a bludger. Now where is Susan?" Harry asked.

"She went back to the Hufflepuff common room to borrow Hannah's broom for Ginny." Tonks said.

"Ginny have you ever flown before? I mean besides the first year flying lessons?" Draco asked.

Ginny just rolled her eyes. "Yes Draco." Ginny said with a grin.

"Ok well if you need any pointers just ask Harry, Tonks, or I." Draco said with a grin.

"Thank you Draco, you are my knight in shining armor." Ginny said sarcastically as Susan arrived with two brooms.

"Here you go Ginny. I know it's just a Cleansweep 5, but it's still a reliable broom." Susan said.

"It's great, thanks Susan." Ginny said.

"Ok well I guess we should pick teams. Since Susan and Blaise are the two keepers why don't you be the captains..." Harry put forth.

"Good idea, I want Harry." Blaise said quickly.

"I was about to suggest that since we are all here to help Susan; she should get the first pick." Harry said with a grin.

"Why thank you Harry. Now who should I choose? I mean this is actually a tough choice. I've seen what Draco can do at Chaser, and Harry is the best Seeker probably at the school. No offense Tonks..." Susan said.

"None taken." Tonks said waving her off.

"I guess I'll go with Harry. I think I remember Draco saying at the beach that Harry's best position wasn't seeker." Susan said.

Harry smiled and walked over to stand by Susan.

"Well I'll take Draco." Blaise said quickly as Draco smirked at Blaise's nerves and stood next to him.

"Hum...well sorry Ginny, but I've never seen you play. I'm going to go with Tonks." Susan said.

Tonks grinned merrily as she quickly joined Harry next to Susan.

"Ok well I guess we've got Ginny." Blaise said.

"Alright let's go." Draco said as he mounted his broom and shot off into the air.

The first few games weren't even close. After Harry, Susan, and Tonks won the first four games 10-2, 10-4, 10-6, and 10-3, they switched up the teams to make them fairer. Harry was now with Ginny and Blaise while Draco was with Susan and Tonks. The next few games were far more competitive; Ginny surprised Harry with how well she could actually fly. Harry, Blaise, and Ginny won the next two games 10-7, 10-5, but Susan, Draco, and Tonks won the last two games 11-9, and 10-8. The last two games took over forty minutes each, and by the time they landed, the sun was setting over the castle.

"That was actually a lot of fun we should do that again." Susan said.

"Yeah definitely." Blaise said.

"See Blaise Quidditch isn't that bad." Harry said as they entered the castle.

"Fine, fine, fine it's not that bad." Blaise said.

"Ok well I have to go down this corridor. Thanks for helping me you guys; I know I'll be able to make the reserve team this year." Susan said with a grin.

"No problem, Susan." Harry said as Susan waved goodbye and walked down a darkened corridor.  
Staff Lounge, Hogwarts.

While Harry, Draco, Tonks, Ginny, Susan, and Blaise were playing Quidditch, Albus Dumbledore was giving his final remarks at the first staff meeting of the new term.

"Well I suppose that is it everyo..." Dumbledore said as large owl swooped into the room and landed directly in front of him. Dumbledore immediately recognized the crest for the Ministry of Magic. He took the letter from the owl's leg and opened it.

Mr. Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore

Harry J. Potter has officially submitted a petition to have you removed as his Magical Guardian. The case will be held in front of the Wizengamot on the thirty first of October. As for all cases of this nature, you are magically banned from speaking with Mr. Harry J. Potter about the case. You must place two drops of blood on the bottom of this page to 1.) Confirm that you have received the letter 2.) Agree to the magically binding agreement. If you do not place two drops of blood on this parchment and send it back to the ministry no later then 12 hrs upon reception of the letter, Mr. Potter shall be declared the victor in the case.

Sincerely,

Brian Toadstrum

Director of Magical Lord and Guardianships.

Dumbledore lowered the letter, shock clearly written upon his face. How did Harry find out I was his guardian? Why would he want to have me removed? Surely I haven't done anything that would warrant a dismissal. Merlin the 31st is the Equinox! This case is going to be in front of the entire Wizengamot.

"Headmaster, are you alright?" Professor Flitwick asked.

"Yes Filius I am fine, something unexpected has just come up at the Ministry." Dumbledore said as he put a finger to his temple.

"Surely nothing too bad, Albus." McGonagall said.

Dumbledore didn't respond, he just read the letter again.

A/N Thanks to Jon3776, who agreed to BETA this story. If you haven't read his work, I would suggest checking it out. I would recommend reading Redemption of the Black Sisters.

A/N2 I hope this long chapter made up for the long time between postings.

A/N3 Love it? Hate it? Review or PM me.

## Chapter 19

### Wizengamot

Harry was so busy at Hogwarts that the next month and a half flew by. Hogwarts was a blur of classes, Quidditch, lessons with Flitwick and McGonagall, Occulmency, tutoring students, preparing for the case against Dumbledore, practicing advanced spells, reading up on becoming an Animagus, and spending time with Draco and Tonks.

Harry was pleasantly surprised at how well he was doing in his classes with everything else that was going on in his life. Charms and Transfiguration were both of course easy O's for him as he was already working on third year material with Flitwick and McGonagall. With Neville as his partner in Herbology, Harry was practically assured one of the top two grades in the class. The same could be said about Potions. Besides that fact that Draco was probably the best brewer in the class, Snape always liked to favor his Godson, and Harry got better grades as they turned in the majority of their assignments together. Astronomy was as fun as it had been last year, and Sinestra seemed to like Blaise and him more than any other Slytherins. History of Magic was a bore as usual; although this year Harry was actually starting to scrape by History with an Acceptable. The only class that Harry was not enjoying was Defense against the Dark Arts. Lockhart was a pathetic teacher who spent most of his time reading passages out of his book and then quizzing the class about it. Harry and Draco officially gave up on his class after the second lesson and spent their class time studying advanced spells. They had managed to perfect the stunning spell and the shield charm among others.

With the return of Marcus Flint as the Slytherin Captain, Harry and Draco found themselves on the pitch three times a week for practice. The fact that they had won the Quidditch cup the year before and that Marcus had failed his Newts did not cause Flint to be any less fanatical about the sport. If it was possible he was even more demanding this year than the last. What was worse, at least for Harry, Flint saw Harry play as a Chaser during a pick up game. Flint seemed to make it his mission in life for Harry to take Pucey's spot at Chaser, something that the sixth year was not thrilled about.

Harry and Draco had practically begged Ginny to try out for the team as either a reserve chaser to take the pressure off Harry or as the team's new Seeker. Ginny had however declined the invitation to try out, something that had continued to perplex Harry and Draco.

Harry's private lessons with McGonagall were moving along excellently. While Harry had to practice all his defensive and offensive transfiguration spells by himself, McGonagall's private lessons were still incredibly useful. In fact, McGonagall finally explained why she had him working on such obscure things such as transfiguring a beaver into a hat.

According to McGonagall, Transfiguration for the first four or five years at Hogwarts was just to allow the students to grasp all the basic concepts of Transfiguration. Once the students passed their owl in Transfiguration, the students would begin more advanced work of changing Animals into other Animals as well as Human transfiguration.

Harry was also glad that McGonagall was making him do less theory tests and more grading papers for the first part of the private lessons. While grading was repetitive and tedious, Harry enjoyed docking points and laughing at his classmates' stupidity. One of the things Harry did notice though was that the infallible Gryffindor know-it-all was slipping. While Granger was still getting O's and very high E's on most of her essays, tests, and practical lessons, she wasn't perfect as she was the year before. Harry of course relished any reason to dock points from her. Unfortunately, McGonagall quickly realized that Harry seemed to be a very harsh grader towards Hermione and graded most of the Gryffindor's papers herself.

Flitwick's private lessons were also incredibly useful. In fact, after their duel in class with the large toy soldiers, Flitwick had a very interesting conversation with Harry during their first private lesson.

::Flashback::

"Mr. Potter please take a seat." Flitwick said as soon as Harry entered the room.

Harry took a seat and only then noticed how excited his charms teacher looked.

"Um...is everything ok, professor?" Harry asked.

"Ok? Well I'd say things are far better then ok, Mr. Potter." Flitwick said, his eyes dancing.

"I...er...don't understand." Harry said.

"Mr. Potter our duel in class today was a bit of a test on my part, one that you passed beyond my wildest dreams." Flitwick said practically bouncing up and down.

"Really?" Harry asked slightly shocked.

"Oh yes, yes, yes. Surely you noticed how the toy soldier we used in class was significantly larger then the little plastic ones we used at the end of last term." Flitwick said with a grin.

"Well yes I did." Harry said.

"Mr. Potter what did Mr. Dolohov say is the fifth rule of animation?" Flitwick asked with a wild grin.

It took Harry a second to remember before he said, "That the complexity of the object animated requires more strength and mental focus."

"Exactly! Now over the summer my friend and colleague James Jordan expanded a bit on that. Now the word complexity means specifically the size, structure, and detail. So you see the fact that you were able to control the larger Soldier shows that you are clearly well ahead of where I thought you would have been as far as animation goes; however, I must ask you Harry, how did you animate the soldier's knife without me noticing?" Flitwick said.

"Er...what do you mean? When I animated the Soldier, I animated the knife as it was apart of the soldier's gear." Harry said.

Flitwick looked stunned. "You actually animated the knife the same time as you did the Soldier?"

"Um yes why did I do something wrong?" Harry asked.

"NO!" Flitwick practically shouted. "What I mean to say," He said again after he regained his composure, "is that is just incredibly impressive. I wouldn't have dreamed you were at such a level. To control not only a fairly complex toy of that size, but also at the same time animate the object that the doll possesses takes a remarkable amount of control. I had assumed that you muttered the animation spell again while I was busy attacking your doll." Flitwick said.

"So does that mean that we are ahead of schedule?" Harry asked grinning.

"Mr. Potter I wouldn't have dreamed you capable of that kind of animation. I wouldn't have dreamed most of fifth or sixth years capable of that. That kind of control is NEWTS worthy. You clearly didn't have that level of control last year. Tell me did you do anything that could possibly give you more control over your animation?" Flitwick asked.

Harry thought about that for a little while. Have I done anything to help improve? I mean I read a lot of theory over the summer, but most of it was transfiguration. I doubt it would be my Shadow Mage skills as I had that last year same thing with my Metamorphmagi. Wait... animation is all about mental focus, mental control... could it be that simple. "Sir I began working a lot on Occulmency. Could that be it?" Harry asked.

Flitwick looked surprised. "Occulmency, Mr. Potter that is very advanced mind magic. That would of course explain your stronger level of control tell me how far are you?"

Harry weighed the pros and cons of telling Flitwick exactly how far he had gotten. On one hand Flitwick was his favorite teacher; however, he did work for Dumbledore. There was however one way to see how much Flitwick really wanted to know or if he was just looking for information for the headmaster. "Um professor, I-I really hate to ask

this, but I'm going to need a wizards oath that you don't repeat what I will tell you to the headmaster or anybody else." Harry said sheepishly.

Flitwick for his part was astonished, Minerva had mentioned that she witnessed Mr. Potter call in a life debt on several first year students, but he hadn't believed it. Once again Flitwick was forced to accept that as much as Harry acted like a Ravenclaw in his studies, he was a Slytherin at heart. "Very well Mr. Potter. I Filius Flitwick swear on my life and my magic to not reveal anything Harry Potter tells me about his Occulmency training."

As soon as the oath was complete and Harry felt the flare of magic, Harry smiled at his favorite teacher. "Thank you sir. I really do trust you, but a few teachers have tried to use Legilimens on me, so I have some trust issues. As far as my Occulmency is concerned I am working on my 11th mental barrier. I want to have 30 in place before I move to the next step." Harry said.

Flitwick was floored. "Mr...Mr. Potter who used Legilimency on you? That is a very serious crime! No teacher is supposed to use such a thing against a student!" Flitwick said in shock.

"I could tell you sir, but you would have to make a separate oath to not tell anyone." Harry said.

"Very well Mr. Potter, "I Filius Flitwick swear on my life and my magic to not reveal the individuals who used Legilimency on Mr. Harry Potter until the time that Harry Potter makes it public knowledge or presses charges."

Harry accepted the oath. "Sir, Professor Snape and Professor Dumbledore both used Legilimency on me last year. They however stopped once I called them out on it." Harry said.

"How did you know? How long have you been working on Occulmency?" Flitwick asked.

"Well sir," Harry said slowly, "I only began Occulmency this summer; however, Salazar is able, as my familiar, to shield my mind from outside presences."

"Remarkable, so it was really lucky that you had him with you on both occasions." Flitwick said.

"Actually, sir. Salazar is with me in every class. In fact, he is with me right now." Harry said as Salazar rose up out of his robes.

"Mr. Potter, you take your snake with you too every class? Surely someone would have noticed?" Flitwick asked.

"No sir, he stays quiet and is wrapped around my chest, stomach, arm, or shoulder most of the time. My baggy robes constantly conceal him." Harry said.

"But you aren't allowed to bring pets with you in class, Mr. Potter. It's a violation of school rules." Flitwick said.

"I know, sir, but the moment a teacher tries to have him removed from me, I will contact Mr. Malfoy and tell him about Dumbledore and Snape's actions against me. I probably would also write a nice letter to the Daily Prophet about it." Harry said.

Flitwick continued to be shocked. His favorite student possessed blackmail that could cause a full blown ministry inquiry as well as the suspensions of the headmaster and the potions master. "You are without a doubt in the correct house, Mr. Potter." Flitwick said with more than a little sadness.

Harry just grinned.

:: End Flashback:

After the revelations Harry made to Flitwick, Harry was glad that Flitwick didn't treat him any differently. In fact, Flitwick seemed to brush the entire blackmail issue under the rug and concentrated on Harry's increased ability in Charms. They spent every lesson working on animating larger and larger objects. Flitwick seemed to be correct

about the Occulmency helping as Harry was able to animate several large, but simple structured objects such as chairs and desks. Maybe it was because of his incredible improvement, but Flitwick said that if Harry wished to practice his Occulmency during a theory day in Charms class, he would not have a problem with it. Flitwick also extended their private lessons by twenty minutes to allow Harry to do some Occulmency work before curfew.

Harry was of course stunned by this. When he asked why, Flitwick simply replied that if Occulmency was allowed him to improve so dramatically at Charms, he of course should spend time practicing it.

Harry was very thankful to his Charms Professor for allowing him to do that since he had very little time on his own to work on Occulmency. With the extra practice Harry completed his thirteenth mental wall by the end of September and his fourteenth and fifteenth near the end of October.

Harry's time with Neville working on Transfiguration felt much less like tutoring and more like teaching. Harry quickly found that Neville had problems fully understanding the theory of Transfiguration and that was what was affecting his practical skills. When Harry would fully explain the theory behind the transfiguration, not the brief version McGonagall said to students, Neville would instantly improve. Harry had spoken to McGonagall about this, and she said that although it was rare sometimes a student needed the more complex theory to understand the material.

McGonagall provided Neville with a more expansive book on theory, and Neville began to receive consistent E's and O's. However, Neville refused to stop the private lessons with Harry. He even got into a surprisingly loud argument with McGonagall in front of the entire class when she had tried to revoke the tutoring. Eventually Neville convinced McGonagall that while the book she gave him was great, he often needed Harry's assistance in order to implement it.

Harry found that to be an incredible stretch of the truth, but he didn't deny it. Harry actually enjoyed his time tutoring Neville. While Neville read his book on theory, Harry was able to get done with most of his Transfiguration homework for the week.

Harry did wish his Charms tutoring went as well as his Transfiguration though. In Charms, Harry had to tutor a first year Gryffindor named Colin Creevy. That particular first year had to be the most annoying person Harry had ever met. On the first day Harry had met the kid, he admitted to being muggleborn. Every tutoring session was a constant test to Harry's patience and Occulmency skills to refrain from cursing him. However, no amount of patience would allow Harry to put up with the boy's constant comparisons between the muggle and Wizarding world. Whenever Collin brought up his parents, his brother, or some aspect of the muggle world, Harry would tell him to get out and that the session was over.

Draco was also cursed to have to tutor a Gryffindor Mudblood; however, his was a second year named Dean Thomas. Harry and Draco would get into constant arguments about who had the worse tutoring assignments, and it usually ended up in a draw. Tonks understood Harry's hatred of muggleborns and muggles so she seemed to accept his desire to strangle Creevy. It didn't hurt that when Colin found out she was a metamorphmagus he constantly pestered her to change for him. Ginny seemed to be uncomfortable taking an anti-muggle or muggleborn stance, and she looked constantly nervous during Harry and Draco's rants. Blaise as usual just stayed quiet until the conversation changed.

Harry was so busy with everything he was doing, that the only free day he had was Sunday. He usually spent it hanging out with Draco and Tonks in the library or in an empty classroom. Together they would all practice advanced defensive or offensive spells, needing to get in some practice since Lockhart was a joke. Tonks had also started to teach them some basic Arithmacy and Ancient Runes. Draco instantly took to Ancient Runes and was soon explaining it to Tonks who was struggling in the class. Harry was not bad at Ancient Runes, but he excelled in Arithmacy. Tonks of course was far better as she was the daughter of a spell crafter and her mother had spent a lot of time explaining Arithmacy to her. Harry though was a quick study and the two of them would constantly talk about the possibility of creating their own spells.

Late at night before he went to bed, Harry would either read up on the theory behind becoming an Animagus or the theory of summoning Lethifolds. While it was a lofty goal, Harry was confident that he would be able to do the Animagus transformation by Christmas if he could get the potion. His skill in transfiguration alone convinced him that it was attainable.

Summoning Lethifolds though was an entirely different matter. The theory presented was so complex and badly organized that Harry wasn't sure if Le Roché wasn't a schizophrenic. Le Roche would start explaining some basic theory to the summoning before going off on wild tangents that had nothing at all to do with it. After a month and a half of reading the man's notes, Harry was no closer to understanding how to accomplish it.

The most pressing thing that Harry was doing though was the trial to have Dumbledore removed as his Guardian. Lucius had written to him and explained that Dumbledore was not allowed to speak to him about the case. Harry was very happy about that. He still kept Salazar around him protection though in case the Headmaster ever got curious and tried to force information from his mind with Legilimens.

Besides his daily communication with Lucius about the case, Harry also used a portkey to travel to meet his Barrister twice. Dumbledore didn't like letting Harry leave the castle unsupervised, but the Wizengamot forced him to allow Harry time to speak with his representation. Harry was just glad that he didn't have to come up with an excuse to get out of History of Magic.

Saturday October 30th, Great Hall, Hogwarts

Harry sat with Draco, Blaise, Ginny, and Susan at the Slytherin table. Susan was decked out in Slytherin Green and Silver for the first Quidditch match of the season. Susan had made the Hufflepuff reserve team and was going to be joining Ginny and Blaise in the Slytherin stands for the game against Gryffindor. Of course being the consummate Hufflepuff, she wished Tonks good luck before coming over to the table.

"So aren't you guys nervous at all?" Ginny asked.

"No." Harry replied.

"No." Draco said.

"Liars." Blaise said with a smirk. "Don't let them fool you, Ginny. The thought of losing to Tonks and the Gryffindors probably gave them nightmares last night."

Susan and Ginny grinned madly.

"Thanks Blaise." Harry said sarcastically.

"Come on it's obvious. The entire school is antsy about this match guys. The Gryffindors have been boasting about their team all week, and we've put what, like eight of their students in the hospital wing?" Blaise said.

"Nine. I hexed Creevy last night during our study session." Harry said.

"Yeah, I heard you got detention for a week." Susan said with a grin.

"It was worth it. He actually compared Quidditch to that muggle sport Football. Little bugger deserved losing his mouth and eyelids." Harry said as Draco nodded in agreement.

"You're lucky it was Flitwick who found out what happened first, McGonagall or Dumbledore might have tried to keep you from playing." Blaise said.

"No way. If Gryffindor beat us with me not playing, the win would mean nothing and everyone would scream that it was fixed." Harry said.

"Slytherin team let's go." Flint said loudly as he stood up.

Harry and Draco stood up to loud cheers from the Slytherin table, which were slightly drowned out by the boos and angry yells from the rest of the school.

The seven boys made their way down to the locker room, changed into their Quidditch uniforms, and waited for Flint's speech.

"Alright. This is the start to our second straight year with the cup. I want us to go out there and play loose. We know we can beat those Lions. The only reason they thought they were better than us last year was because that traitor Montague leaked our playbook. So let's get out there and get it done." Flint said as everyone cheered, grabbed their brooms, and flew out onto the field.

Harry spotted Tonks during the pre-match laps around the field and the two friends waved at each other. They landed a few moments later and Madam Hooch stepped forward.

"Alright I want a clean game you two. I'm going to call this game tight and any infraction will be penalized. Now shake hands." Madam Hooch said.

Harry rolled his eyes as Flint and Wood seemed to try to snap each other's hands. As soon as they broke apart, Madam Hooch whistled and everyone shot into the air.

Harry instantly flew high above the action and began looking for the Snitch. He spotted Tonks a few feet away from him. They smiled at each other before they took off to opposite sides of the field searching for the elusive golden ball.

"AND IT'S JOHNSON WITH THE QUAFILL SHE PASSES TO SPINET WHO DROPS IT OFF TO BELL. LOOK AT THOSE THREE GIRLS GO. BELL PASSES TO JOHNSON, SHE DODGES A BLUDGER FROM DERIK SHOOT AND SCORES! 10-0 GRYFFINDOR!" Lee Jordan's magically enhanced voice said.

Harry grimaced as he recognized the Gryffindor game plan. Angelina Johnson and Katie Bell would both double team Draco while Alicia Spinet stayed between Flint and Pucey. Harry was tempted to tell Flint to call a time out, but decided to find the Snitch first. Hopefully they would be able to adjust before the Gryffindors got out to too big of a lead.

Forty minutes later though, Harry was still searching for the illusive Snitch. While Draco, Flint, and Pucey had been able to adjust to the double team, Bole and Derik would relentlessly foul the Gryffindors. The score was 130-20 and Harry still had not seen the Snitch.

Out of the corner of his eye, Harry saw Tonks go into a massive dive. Fearing the worst, Harry tore off after her. He pushed his Nimbus to its top speed, but he was still several feet behind Tonks. As the ground rapidly approached, Tonks extended her left arm, and Harry pushed his broom forward to block her. However, Tonks put her hand back on her broom and pulled up. Harry's eyes widened when he realized that she had tricked him. With the ground rapidly approaching, Harry pulled up with every last bit of strength that he had. His effort was rewarded when he was able to pull his broom level just inches from the ground.

When everyone saw that he hadn't crashed, three fourths of the stadium let out a horrible moan of disappointment. Play continued and the Gryffindor chasers continued their dominance. Twenty minutes later After Katie Bell scored making the score 260-30, Harry couldn't take it anymore and signaled a time out from Madam Hooch.

Harry landed on the ground and a moment later an angry looking Marcus, Draco, Pucey, Bole, Derik, and Warrington landed as well.

"Potter what are you doing calling time out!" Flint yelled.

"Shut up! We are being embarrassed Flint! We have only one chance at getting back into the game." Harry said.

"Oh yeah what's that!" Warrington said aggressively.

"First, shut your trap Warrington. Second, I'm going to replace Pucey as Chaser. Once we get say 110 points down we'll switch back." Harry said.

"You think you can just take my spot just like that Potter!" Pucey raged as he stepped forward threatening.

Not one to back down, Harry stepped forward and said, "Yes! You are the worst Chaser on the team, Pucey. With me out there, they won't be able to double up Draco anymore." Harry said.

"Ok Potter let's think this through. Let's say we do this why wait till 110 points? Why not put you back at seeker when we get say 140 down?" Flint asked.

"How long would it take for the Gryffindors to score two quick goals on us and we are back in the same predicament? We only have one more time out after this Flint and we'll need that to make the switch back. We can't afford to do it too early." Harry said.

Flint hesitated for a second before saying, "Ok let's do it. Pucey don't even bother trying to catch the blasted Snitch just make sure that girl doesn't get it!" Flint yelled in Pucey's face before he flew up to Madam Pomfrey.

"THE SLYTHERIN TEAM HAS MADE A SUBSTITUTION. REPLACING ALAN PUCEY AT CHASER WILL BE HARRY POTTER." Lee Jordan said as the crowd was silent in shock

As soon as Jordan made the comment about the substitution, Wood called a time out. When they broke, Madam Hooch signaled for the game to resume.

Harry instantly took the Quaffle and flew across the pitch. He instantly recognized that the Gryffindors had kept with their strategy of double teaming Draco. He grinned as he squared up Alica Spinet one on one. The Gryffindor fourth year was good, but Harry realized that she wasn't even close to being in his league. He did a mid air roll to avoid a Bludger, and faked a pass to Flint. Spinet completely bought the fake pass and began moving towards Flint. That was all the time Harry needed to rocket past her and get to Wood. The Gryffindor keeper flew out to stop him, but Harry had already released the Quaffle and made the shot through the lower right hoop.

The Slytherin stands exploded in cheers.

Over the next ten minutes, Harry showed everyone just how good a flier he really was. Wood quickly realized that Harry was a phenomenal Chaser and pulled Angelina Johnson and Katie Bell off Draco to double him. However, the two girls weren't able to bother Harry like they could Draco. Harry flew circles around them or pasted the Quaffle off at the perfect time.

The Gryffindors also found their offence starting to stagger as Harry successfully—and repeatedly—managed stop Angelina Johnson from getting the Quaffle. The Gryffindors of course tried to force the ball into their star chaser, but Harry was always there to intercept it.

In fact the only thing that was keeping Harry at Chaser was the constant penalties that Derik and Bole causing. As the match approached the third hour of play with the score 350-220, Harry looked on in horror as Tonks slowly drifted away from Pucey before going into a dive. Harry watched Bole and Derik hit a pair of Bludgers at her, and Pucey pathetically gave chase, but they were all too far away. Tonks pulled out of the dive with the little golden ball in her hand.

Harry, Draco, and Flint swore so loud that they were able to hear each other over the deafening roar of the Hufflepuffs, Ravenclaws, and Gryffindors. Harry landed on the ground with Draco, and the two of them made their way to the changing room still muttering about Pucey's uselessness and Bole and Derik's incompetence.  
Sunday October 31st, Great Hall, Hogwarts.

The aftermath of the Slytherin loss was felt by everyone the next day. While practically every Slytherin approached Harry and Draco to tell them that losing wasn't their fault. Pucey, Warrington, Bole, and Derik didn't make it to breakfast. The four Slytherins spent the night in the hospital wing after the entire common room took turns hexing them the night before. After the four players resembled jelly with faces, Flint and some other seventh years levitated them out of the common room, and left them in the corridors where some prefects found them.

The other major oddity the next morning was Tonks sitting and laughing with the Gryffindors.

Draco was incredible upset by her sitting with them. Harry was also upset, but his mind was focused more on the case before the Wizengamot.

"Just look at her sitting there! What is she thinking? Sure they all love her now, but what about every other day of the year! Why does she even bother speaking to them at all? I swear Harry sometimes I think that if Tonks had friends in Gryffindor she would drop us like we were nothing." Draco barked darkly causing several nearby first years to move away slightly.

"I don't think she would do that, Draco. I mean sure she's happy about the victory, but she's would never choose them over us." Harry said as he looked up to see Tonks laughing with Hermione Granger. After looking at his watch, Harry started to stand up.

"Where are you going, Harry?" Draco asked.

"Draco what day is today?" Harry asked sarcastically.

"Halloween of...Ohhh..." The blond Slytherin's eyes widened. "When do we leave?" he asked, once he had remembered the importance of the date.

"Well it's 9am now, and our portkey leaves at 9:30 from Dumbledore's office. We both still need to change though and I need to grab Tonks." Harry said as he stood up.

"Portkey? Where are you going?" Ginny asked.

"I'm sure it will all be in the paper tomorrow, Ginny. Draco, are you ready to go?" Harry asked.

"Yes are you still going to ask Tonks to come? Maybe you should leave her with her adoring Gryffindor friends now." Draco practically spat.

Harry sighed. "Draco, I know your mad about the loss, but come on I thought you took our all your frustration of Derik last night? Besides,

Tonks isn't like that. She wouldn't forget something like this. Now remember to put on some dress robes, Draco, your dad said we'd be going to Magico's for lunch."

Draco nodded his head successfully chastised. He said goodbye to Blaise and Ginny before quickly leaving the Great Hall.

"Good luck Harry." Blaise said.

"Thanks Blaise you sure you don't want to come? I mean your dad could use the same rule that Lord Malfoy used for Draco?" Harry asked.

"Nah, I figure in a few years I'll be so sick of politics that there isn't any reason to get a head start. Just tell me about it the second you get back." Blaise said seriously.

"No problem." Harry said as he stood up and started walking to the Gryffindor table.

As soon as everyone realized where he was going, the Gryffindors started to shout.

"Oiy everyone look..." George bellowed.

"It's the losing team's seeker..." Fred said with a booming voice.

"Or was he the losing team's chaser?" George asked loudly.

"Not so hot now are you Potter!" Ron spat.

"Yeah come to find out how we beat you?" A Gryffindor 5th year shouted.

"Nah probably wants to take lessons from Tonks." Dean Thomas said.

Harry grimaced slightly at the idiotic Gryffindors, but he wasn't going to give them the satisfaction of seeing him riled up. Losing the game hurt, but it was nothing compared to this case before the Wizengamot.

"Tonks, let's go we are running late as it is. Draco just left to go change, and if we don't hurry we won't make it on time." Harry said looking right at his friend.

Tonks looked confused. "Go with you and Draco where?" She asked.

Harry's eyes rose in shock. "Tonks come on you know what we are doing today."

"Er...no Harry what are you talking about?" Tonks said as the Gryffindor insults continued to come.

Harry suddenly felt a growing contempt for his best friend

"Stop speaking in riddles you stupid Slytherin!" Lee Jordan shouted for everyone to hear.

Tonks shot Lee a warning look before turning back to Harry. "I'm sorry Harry, but I don't know what you're talking about." Tonks said looking confused.

Harry narrowed his eyes. "Are you bloody kidding me, Tonks?" Harry said angrily.

Tonks seemed clearly taken aback by her best friend's obvious anger at her. "Harry what is it? I mean you're not mad about the match are you because I mean it was just Quidditch."

"Can you honestly tell me you've forgotten what today is?" Harry asked sadly.

Tonks looked more confused then ever but before she could say anything though someone shouted. "Piss off Potter, go ruin some other house's Halloween breakfast."

The word Halloween seemed to snap Tonks out of her confusion. "Merlin, I'm so sorry, Harry. I forgot it was Halloween for a second when do we leave?" Tonks asked quickly as she stood up.

"Be outside Dumbledore's office by 9:20, Tonks. Also we are going to Magico's for lunch so we have to wear dress robes." Harry said his anger quickly leaving.

"Alright I'll go get changed." Tonks said as the two of them left the stunned Gryffindors.

"For a moment I was worried you forgot." Harry admitted.

"Yeah well, I did sort of forget what today was. I'm really sorry about that." Tonks said sheepishly.

"Don't worry, it happens to everyone. Besides I bet the victory party was pretty crazy last night." Harry commented.

"You have no idea. Although from what I heard about what you guys did to Bole, Derik, Warrington, and Pucey, you must have had some party last night as well." Tonks said with a grin.

"Worthless little buggers deserved it." Harry muttered as he headed down to the dungeons while Tonks climbed the stairs to get to Gryffindor tower.

Fifteen minutes later, Harry, Draco, and Tonks were all standing outside of Dumbledore's office. "So what's the password, Harry?" Tonks asked.

"I don't know Dumbledore just told me to be here at 9:20 ready to leave." Harry said.

"Well it's 9:24 and if we miss our portkey father is going to be upset." Draco said.

"I guess we could try to guess the password." Harry said.

"Ok...um...Advanced theoretical Transfiguration." Tonks said weakly.

"A fine guess Ms. Tonks, however, incorrect." Dumbledore said striding forward with a large grin on his face.

"Blood Quills." Dumbledore said loudly.

The stone gargoyle instantly leaped up and moved out of the way allowing them to pass.

'Blood Quills' Draco mouthed to Tonks in shock.

"Sir you do know those are for Vampire's right?" Tonks asked.

"Oh yes, my friend Stephanie is a big fan of them although I hear they are too sugary." Dumbledore said as Harry, Draco, and Tonks stared at him open mouthed.

"Now Harry who is going to be going with you?" Dumbledore asked.

"Tonks." Harry said.

"Very well, Mr. Malfoy if you could return to the Great Hall." Dumbledore said.

"Oh well Draco's father requested his presence at the trial. Since Mr. Malfoy is a Lord, Draco can attend a Wizengamot meeting as long as he stands with his father." Harry said.

"Ah yes, the Lord/Heirship Act of 1432. Very well everyone please place your hand on the portkey and we will leave in 3...2...1...activate." Dumbledore said as they all felt the pull from the portkey.

A few moments later, they had arrived in the atrium of the Ministry of Magic.

"Harry, right on time I see."

Harry turned around in time to see his Barrister, Mr. Novitch, striding towards him with Mr. Malfoy a step behind.

"Hello sirs." Harry said shaking hands with both his Barrister and Lucius.

"I will see you inside, Harry." Dumbledore said kindly to Harry. He gave a curt "Good day," to Lucius and Mr. Novitch as he strode off.

When everyone was sure that Dumbledore was gone, Lucius said, "Alright this is what's going to happen. Our case is the fourth on the docket so it will probably take place around 11. The Muggleborn Re-Education Act is the last one today so after your case is over we will all go to Magico's for lunch. Narcissa will take my spot in the Wizengamot. When lunch is over, we shall return to the Wizengamot." Lucius said.

A thin man quickly ran over to where they were standing and spoke quietly to Mr. Novitch before departing.

"Lucius you and Draco have to get inside, the first vote is about to be cast." Mr. Novitch said.

"Very well, Draco you will sit with me. Harry, Tonks you both will be in the visitors sections until the time of the case. Then Mr. Novitch will collect you Harry." Lucius said.

Harry and Tonks nodded their heads before following Lucius down a series of winding hallways. When they reached a lift, Lucius opened the door and they all stepped inside.

"Wizengamot chamber." Lucius said loudly.

The lift doors instantly closed and began descending. After a few minutes, the doors opened and Harry's eyes widened while Tonks gasped in shock.

"Welcome to the Wizengamot." Lucius said with a grin.

Harry could only numbly nod his head and enter the largest room he had ever seen. It made the Great Hall look like the Slytherin common room. Everywhere around him, witches and wizards were speaking with each other or sending enchanted paper airplanes back and forth. The seats seemed to rise up into the very rafters of the ceiling. And in the center of this massive room, Albus Dumbledore sat on a golden chair.

"If you would follow me, Mr. Harry Potter."

The voice jerked Harry out of his awe and he looked down to see a tiny elf.

"Er...Ok." Harry said as he and Tonks followed the little elf up several flights of stairs before the elf stopped and pointed to a door marked Public Visitors.

Harry looked around for a moment before changing his hair blond and hiding his scar.

"Don't want to be recognized, Harry?" Tonks asked with a grin.

Harry just rolled his eyes before pushing the door open. As soon as he stepped into the door, he was instantly glad he changed his appearance. Some twenty cameras flashed in his and Tonks' face before he heard one of the reports say, "It's not him."

"What the hell was that?" Tonks asked while angrily rubbing her eyes.

"Harry Potter is brining a case before the Wizengamot today." One of the camera men said.

Harry was about to shoot Tonks a smug look when he spotted several Goblins sitting in an isolated corner of the visitors' box. Curious to see if they were here for his case, he nudged Tonks, and the two of them walked over and sat down next to them. The large group of Goblins eyed them distrust. Finally one spoke up.

"May we help you?"

Harry recognized the Goblin as the one who first brought him to Horik's office on his first trip to Gringotts. "Your name is Magnar right?" Harry asked tentatively.

The Goblin's eyes rose. "How do you know m...ah yes I forgot you had that little talent, Mr. Potter." Magnar said quietly.

"Are you here for my case?" Harry asked.

"Indeed, Director Horik instructed us to work with your Barrister. Now I believe we should end this conversation before the press figure out who you are. You are drawing odd looks by talking to Goblins." Magnar said.

Harry turned around and sure enough, several members of the press were staring at him curiously. Harry just nodded once to Magnar before moving a few seats away with Tonks. Far below them, they saw Draco sitting next to his father and several other regal looking men.

"This is wild huh?" Harry said quietly.

"Yeah, I'm glad that you changed your appearance. Can you imagine sitting here with all those reporters?" Tonks whispered as Dumbledore's wand sent several bangs into the air.

"This meeting of the full Wizengamot on the fall Equinox has come to order. All who do not have business or a say in these proceedings remain silent or be banished from this hall." Dumbledore's magically enhanced voice boomed.

As soon as Dumbledore was finished speaking, everyone quickly found a seat the hall grew silent.

"The first vote today is on a proposition to lift the ban on flying carpets. Several members of the Persian Wizengamot are here to speak of several new developments, which allow them to be less conspicuous if seen by muggles." A scribe said.

The first few cases or proposals brought before the Wizengamot were over quickly and soon the scribe stood up again. "Case 4443429 is a challenge of guardianship by future Lord Harry J. Potter. Future Lord Potter wishes to have Chief Warlock Albus Percival Wulfic Brian Dumbledore removed as his magical Guardian. We ask the future Lord Potter to please vacate the visitors' box and make his way down to the main floor to join your barrister. Lord Dumbledore as the defendant in this civil case please leave the chair of the Chief

Warlock and take your spot on the main floor. Lady Amelia Bones shall take over Lord Dumbledore's role as Chief Warlock for the duration of this case." The scribe said.

Harry groaned it wasn't supposed to be this way, Novitch was supposed to come collect him. Sighing, Harry stood up and began walking out of the visitors' box. When he reached the door though, several members of the press shouted, "He's under glamour!" What followed was pure chaos. The press immediately began taking pictures like mad, shouting questions at him, and blocking the exit to the visitors' box.

"The press will allow future Lord Potter to leave the visitors' box least they be banished from the Wizengamot chamber! Aurors secure Mr. Potter's safe arrival to the Wizengamot Floor." Madam Bones' magically amplified voice said sharply.

The door to the Visitors' box immediately burst opened knocking several photographers down. Several wizards with purple robes entered with their wands raised. The press immediately stopped asking questions at the sight of the Aurors. In the confusion, Harry reverted back to his original appearance.

"Mr. Potter?"

Harry looked up and found himself staring at the face of a large bald, black Auror.

"Yes." Harry responded.

"I'm Auror Kingsley Shacklebolt if you will follow me I will take you to the floor of the Wizengamot." The Auror named Kingsley said kindly.

Harry nodded and quickly followed Auror Shacklebolt down the stairs, and onto the main floor of the Wizengamot. As soon as he was visible, the entire Wizengamot broke out into excited whispers. Harry quickly found Mr. Novitch and sat down at a small brown table with him.

"You may state your case, Mr. Novitch." Madam Bones said.

"Thank you Lady Bones. Lords and Ladies, members of the Wizengamot, ministry officials, members of the press this case is very simple. Future Lord Harry J. Potter had significant information withheld from him illegally by his Magical Guardian Lord Dumbledore. The information was all privileged Gringotts information that no one short of a blood relative should have been able to access, Guardian or not. When it became clear to the Goblins that a level 9 fraud had been committed against an ancient family, they began their own investigation over a year ago. Several Goblins who were instructed to carry out this investigation are here to testify that it was Chief Warlock Lord Albus Percival Wulfric Brain Dumbledore who was intercepting future Lord Potter's privileged information. What is more despicable is that Lord Dumbledore has not even attempt to make himself known as future Lord Potter's Magical Guardian in 12 years. It is future Lord Potter's wish to have Lord Dumbledore removed as his Magical Guardian and have it replaced with Lord Lucius Malfoy." Novitch said.

Several Wizengamot members began muttering with each other after Novitch finished speaking.

"Lord Dumbledore what is your say?" Madam Bones asked silencing the whispering.

"Thank you Lady Bones. Members of the Wizengamot, I do not deny the accusations against me. I did withhold future Lord Potter's Gringotts information, but not out of any malice or attempted subterfuge. Future Lord Potter is in charge of one of the largest estates in all of Brittan if not Europe. I ask you—should an 11 or 12 year old boy be asked to manage that kind of account? I thought it prudent to wait until future Lord Potter's 15th birthday before revealing his fortune to him. I had hoped that by then he would have matured to a point where he would be prepared to begin managing his estate. This however, was my mistake, and I have already been punished for it. The Goblins stripped me of my title of future Lord Potter's Magical Financial Guardian. As to the charge of not revealing myself to future Lord Potter, I ask you the simple question of why? Future Lord Potter has enough fame placed upon him as you all just witnessed. Should it have become known that I, Albus Dumbledore was the boy's Magical Guardian, he would have gained a greater notoriety. Besides future Lord Potter does not live in my care, but with

his muggle relatives. What could have been gained from my revealing myself to him? I do apologize to future Lord Potter for my mistakes, but can only say that had you come to me with this information we could have surely resolved it without bringing it forth in front of the entire Wizengamot." Dumbledore said.

"Very well both parties have had their say, and the accusations have been confirmed by Lord Dumbledore. I shall now call upon a vote. Those in favor of removing Chief Warlock Albus Dumbledore as future Lord Potter's Magical Guardian please vote now." Lady Bones said.

Several members shot red beams of light out of their wands at a huge scroll, which hovered in the center of the room. When each beam of red struck the scroll, a number in the center of the scroll grew larger. Finally it finished at 142.

"Those against?" Madam Bones asked.

Again a large number of flashes shot towards the scroll. Harry held his breath as the scroll's number continued to grow. He watched in horror as the number continued to get large. 120...124...128...134...137...139...142...146.

"I'm sorry Harry." Novitch said softly.

Harry just hung his head in defeat.

"Future Lord Potter's petition to have Lord Dumbledore removed as his Magical Guardian has been defeated by four votes." Madam Bones said.

"Can we appeal? Get them to vote again?" Harry pleaded.

"I'm sorry Harry, but the only chance of that would have been if we meet in front of something less than the full Wizengamot." Novitch said.

"Surely we can do something?" Harry asked this time letting his obvious anger into his voice.

"Harry you said that you didn't want to bring up the Dursley's. I told you that would be the only sure fire way to get Dumbledore removed." Novitch said.

Harry's green eyes darkened at the mention of the Dursley's.

"Come Harry we should leave. You have to meet Lucius at Magico's." Novitch said putting a hand on Harry's shoulder and leading him out of the courtroom. They had just left the main floor when Harry was assaulted by a massive army of reporters and photographers barely being held back by the Aurors.

"Mr. Potter a word for witch weekly?"

"Future Lord Mr. Potter, Michael O'Toole Daily Prophet, what is your reaction to the vote?"

Harry turned the reporter furiously. "You want to know what I think about the vote?" he spat. "I think it's an insult that Albus Dumbledore is still my Magical Guardian. I mean the man has been absent my entire life and steals privileged information from me, yet a majority of the Wizengamot apparently thinks that's ok behavior for their chief officer. Why exactly does the Wizarding world seem to listen to whatever he says without second thought? Merlin, is it so much to want a Guardian who actually wants to be involved in my life?" Harry asked earnestly. "I'm very close to Lord Malfoy; truthfully I consider him and his wife more like an uncle and aunt. I don't trust Headmaster Dumbledore further then I could throw him."

"Mr. Potter do you see this ruling affecting your relationship with him as headmaster at Hogwarts?"

"What relationship? I neither want nor have a relationship with him at all."

"Rita Skeeter, future Lord Potter will you consider a transfer to another magical school?"

"What? No, I would never transfer unless the headmaster did something to retaliate against me for my case against him. I couldn't imagine leaving my friends and besides I have too good of a relationship with several of my teachers to leave." Harry said.

"Like who? Who are you close to?" Rita asked again.

"The teachers? Well I'd say just off the top of my head Professor Flitwick, Professor McGonagall..." Harry started.

"What about Severus Snape?" Another reporter shouted

"Professor Snape is my head of house of course I respect him, I would have thought that would have been a given." Harry lied quickly.

"What about Gilderory Lockhart?" A blond woman asked.

"I think Gilderory Lockhart is the single worst teacher I've ever had at Hogwarts, and that includes professor Quirrell, who attempted to kill me." Harry said causing the reporters to stare at him in shock before frantically writing.

"Harry there you are come on we need to meet up with Mr. Malfoy and Draco." Tonks said pushing her way through the crowd of people.

"Harry is that your girlfriend?"

"What's her name?"

"How long have you been going out?"

"Oh shut up, I'm not his girlfriend, he's just my best friend." Tonks barked at the reporters.

"Let's go." Novitch said pushing the ministry issued portkey into them and saying, "Activate."  
Leaky Cauldron, London

Harry, Tonks, and Novitch arrived outside the Leaky Cauldron with a soft thump.

"Harry, that wasn't wise. Why did you speak to the press?" Novitch asked.

"Why shouldn't I? I mean it's the best way for me to show everyone that Dumbledore isn't some almighty God. How in Merlin's name could we have lost?" Harry asked angrily as he used his powers to morph away his scar and change his hair blond as they all walked into the Leaky Cauldron.

They quickly made it past the toothless barman and strode up to the back wall. Novitch pressed his wand against a brick causing the wall to vanish, exposing Diagon Alley.

"Let's go. Magico's is over by Gringotts." Novitch said.

"Whatever." Harry grumbled.

"Come on, it's not the end of the world, Harry." Tonks said slinging her arm over his shoulder.

Harry was in no mood to be comforted though. He just mumbled about the useless wizards who couldn't think for themselves.

Five minutes later, they arrived at Magico's. Novitch went up to the host and said, "Has Lord Malfoy arrived yet?"

The host seemed to appraise Mr. Novitch for a good minute and a half before saying, "Who wishes to know?"

"The rest of his party." Novitch replied as Harry stepped forward with Tonks.

"Follow me." The man said as he led them through the restaurant, which was surprisingly full. They walked through a curtain, and Harry instantly spotted Lucius and Draco sitting at the lone table in the room.

"Ah Harry, Tonks please sit. Thank you Novitch your duties are no longer required; however, I would remind you about your oath of confidentiality." Lucius said as Novitch nodded, bowed, and exited.

As soon as Harry and Tonks placed their orders, Lucius began casting several spells.

"What was all that sir?" Harry asked.

"Anti-listening charm and Perimeter ward." Lucius said.

"Oh." Harry replied.

"Sorry about the case, Harry. I can't believe you lost by 4 bloody votes." Draco said in annoyance.

"Yeah no kidding." Harry grumbled.

"So when are we going back to Hogwarts?" Tonks asked.

"Well after lunch, we will meet up with the headmaster in the atrium of the ministry and get your return portkeys. Tonks, Draco you both shall return immediately. Harry you will return after the vote for the Muggle Re-Education Act." Lucius said.

Ministry of Magic, London

Two hours later, Draco, Tonks, Harry, and Lucius walked into the atrium of the Ministry of Magic. The moment that Harry entered though, photographers and press swooped down on the group.

"Future Lord Potter, why are you back?"

"Is it true you intended to voice your opinion on the Muggle Re-Education Act?"

"What is the root of your dislike of Headmaster Dumbledore?"

Before Harry could tell them to bugger off, Lucius flicked his wand and every reporter was thrown back a good 30 feet.

"Wish I knew that spell earlier." Harry mumbled.

"Ah good, right on time, Lucius. Draco, Tonks, Harry are you all ready to go back to school." Dumbledore asked striding forward.

Harry just sent the coldest glare he could fathom at the headmaster causing the man's smile to vanish. "Harry, surely you don't hold the outcome of the trial against me?" Dumbledore said.

"I am not returning to Hogwarts yet. I have something else to do before the Wizengamot." Harry said.

"Harry I reviewed the docket before I left, you have no other cases or petitions to be brought forth today." Dumbledore said.

"That's right, but I do intend to voice my opinion about one of the propositions." Harry said.

"Harry you are not yet a Lord." Dumbledore stated.

"Oh while Harry isn't a Lord until his 16th birthday, Headmaster, he is able to speak out under the end of line clause. Since Harry is the last surviving member of his family, he is actually able to speak out just not vote." Lucius said.

Very well Harry, I will arrive back to Hogwarts with you myself then after the last case. I hope you don't mind waiting till six to leave?" Dumbledore asked.

"That will be fine." Harry said stiffly.

Dumbledore looked at Harry curiously for a moment before handing the portkey to Draco and Tonks. He tapped it once with his wand before saying, "Hogwarts."

As soon as Draco and Tonks were gone, Lucius immediately guided Harry past the Headmaster and the press. They quickly made their way to the Wizengamot chamber and Lucius told Harry to take the open seat next to him.

The next three hours were among the most boring of Harry's life. He watched as the Wizengamot debated such mundane things as

international cauldron standards, a new restriction on manticores, and a proposal to allow a company named Zonko's to use a class E deadly substance. Finally the last issue of the day came up. Harry watched as Dumbledore stood from the spot of Chief Warlock.

"The Final issue today is a Bill proposed by Lord Macmillan. The Bill is named the Muggleborn Re-Education Act, and would stipend forty thousand Galleons a year to a better introduce muggleborn witches and wizards into our culture. I ask that Lord Macmillan take center stage along with Lady Bones, who represents the Ministry." Dumbledore said.

Harry watched as the pompous Lord Macmillan and Madam Bones both walked to the center of the Wizengamot .

"Lords, Ladies, friends, colleagues I ask that you give serious consideration to this proposal. The education of witches and wizards is a very important issue, and we must face facts. Muggleborns are at a significant disadvantage going into Hogwarts. The pure shock of accepting that Magic is real can not just be undone by having a Hogwarts staff member show up to the child's house and tell them. They should become fully aware of the Wizarding world. This bill will allow for groups of ministry appointed guides to show muggleborns and their parents places like Diagon Alley. It is my opinion and the opinion of Lord Dumbledore, the co-writer of this bill that this will dramatically assist in the academic performance of muggleborn students." Lord Macmillan said as several people stood up and applauded.

"Madam Bones what is the say of the ministry?" Dumbledore asked.

"Lord Dumbledore this is not only the say of the ministry, but also my own opinion. I believe that this bill is simply too extravagant in its current state. I mean forty thousand Galleons a year? Do you plan on giving every muggleborn their own broomstick Lord Macmillan? The funds that would go to this bill would be far better suited going into different departments." Madam Bones said.

"Thank you Lord Macmillan and Lady Bones, now before we vote, I open the floor to anyone who wishes to speak." Dumbledore said.

"Do you remember what you are going to say?" Lucius whispered as a Baron finished praising Macmillan's bill.

"I practiced last night about three times." Harry said before standing up saying, "I would like to say something."

Instantly, most the Wizengamot began to jumping up and yelling. It took several powerful blasts from Dumbledore's wand to quite everyone.

"Under The End of Line Clause of 1339, future Lord Potter is allowed to speak on an issue; however, he will not have a vote in these proceedings until he reaches the age of 16." Dumbledore explained.

Harry waited for all the protestors to grow quiet before saying, "Lords and Ladies of the Wizengamot I speak out against this bill. I find that it is not only a serious drain in Galleons, but also completely unnecessary. Are the members of the Wizengamot aware that the top student in my year was a muggleborn? Surely if a muggleborn is able to be the top student at our prestigious school, can they be at that much of a disadvantage?" Harry asked innocently. "Besides, if we begin to give muggleborns extra help where does the end of that slippery slope lie? Will we be soon curving their grades just because they don't have a wizard parent?"

The entire Wizengamot began shouting now. Harry could tell a lot of the people were now screaming for the bill to be thrown out while several others were saying that he was childishly over-exaggerating.

"Future Lord Potter only one Muggleborn was on the list of top ten students in your year while there were six purebloods and three halfbloods. What do you make of that?" A blond haired man asked.

"Well my simple response would be that my year has the sons and daughters of very powerful people. If you don't believe me allow me to go through the list of the top ten Hogwarts students. First is the muggleborn Hermione Granger, Second is the Halfblood Terry Boot, Third is Su Li, daughter of Chinese Ambassador and Charms Master Chan Li, Fourth was myself, Fifth is Padma Patil. I'll admit I do not

know her that well, but I understand the Patil's to be a very old Pureblood family. Sixth was Lisa Turpin, the first daughter of Lord Turpin. Seventh is my good friend Susan Bones, niece of Lady Bones. Eighth is one of my best friends Draco Malfoy, son of Lord Malfoy. Ninth is my other close friend Blaise Zabini, son of Lord Zabini. Tenth is the halfblood Anthony Goldstein. I would challenge you to find a stronger group of purebloods than the group in my year, sir. Besides if the muggleborn Hermione Granger can rise to the top spot maybe the problem isn't that the muggleborns are daunted by magic, but that the other muggleborns are simply too lazy to work hard. That however happens to muggleborns, halfbloods, and purebloods alike, and doesn't warrant giving special help to muggleborns." Harry said.

With his last sentence, Harry sat down with a huge grin on his face. When he looked at Dumbledore, he grinned madly at the look of disappointment on the old man's face. After several other members stood up to voice their agreement with Harry, Dumbledore had no choice but to call for a vote.

The final vote was 130-158 against the bill. When the vote was official and Dumbledore said the bill had been rejected, Harry grinned and shook Lucius' hand.

"Well at least some good came out of today." Harry said still slightly disappointed with the outcome of his own case.

Lucius simply nodded his head, stood up, and led Harry to the Wizengamot floor where he would be departing with Dumbledore. Along the way, the press assaulted them with questions. The most popular seemed to be if he had spoken out against Dumbledore's bill in an act of vengeance against the headmaster. Harry denied that and gave a no comment to every other question.

When they reached the floor of the Wizengamot, Harry smirked as he saw a rather red faced Lord Macmillan and the Headmaster speaking together. Lucius simply led Harry over to where they were standing and said, "Headmaster, I believe you wished to depart at six o'clock it is now ten past." Lucius said.

"Thank you Lucius. Harry, are you ready to go back to Hogwarts?" Dumbledore asked with no anger in his voice.

The fact that the headmaster didn't seem phased by his bill being rejected bothered Harry greatly. He just narrowed his eyes at the aged Headmaster and said, "Yess." Harry's anger caused the word to come out in a half English half parseltongue hiss.

Dumbledore's eyes widened for a split second before he said, "Very well I will speak with you later Lord Macmillan. Good day Lucius."

"Headmaster." Lucius replied.

"Lord Dumbledore." Lord Macmillan said.

Dumbledore took out a large red feather and handed it to Harry. The old Headmaster then took out his wand and said, "Hogwarts."

The portkey instantly activated and a moment later the two of them were standing inside in the main entrance.

"Well I suppose we should get to diner." Dumbledore said cheerfully.

"I think I'm going to go to the Slytherin common room. Andi can bring me my diner." Harry said as he turned around and started to walk towards the dungeons.

"Harry do you mind if I walk with you?" Dumbledore asked.

Harry turned his head to the headmaster and glared at him. "It's your school." Harry growled out reluctantly.

Dumbledore smiled and the two of them began walking towards the dungeons. After a few minutes of silence Dumbledore said, "Harry I sense that you are rather upset about the ruling."

Harry just rolled his eyes. "Why would I be upset? Instead of having a guardian who I like, I'm left with someone who kept my private information from me and ignored me for twelve years."

Dumbledore sighed and put his fingers to his temple. "Harry I apologize for that, I really did think I was acting in your best interest. The Potter fortune is massive, Harry. Your goblin advisors would have managed the accounts until you reached a level of maturity to do so yourself."

"And I guess little things like laws don't matter much if you had the best intentions right?" Harry said sarcastically as they passed a corridor.

"Harry...I can only say that I am sorry so many times. As for not being there for you as you say. I thought it best if you grew up away from all your fame. I mean you are famous for something you can't even remember. Growing up in the Wizarding world could have made your head spin." Dumbledore said his voice pleading for Harry to believe him.

Harry just ignored the headmaster. As they traveled deeper into the dungeons, Harry began to notice that the floor had puddles of water on it. When they turned the next corner though, Harry's eyes widened in shock. "BLOODY HELL!" Harry screamed.

On the wall at the far end of the corridor, the body of Flitch's cat, Ms. Norris, was hanging upside-down by her tail. Two torches illuminated the body along with several words written above her in blood.

ENEMIES OF THE HEIR BEWARE THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS  
HAS BEEN OPENED.

Harry noticed Dumbledore seemed to have completely forgotten about him and quickly strode forward to inspect the wall. Amazed by what he saw, Harry followed, but did his best to stay out of the headmaster's way. When he got close enough to look at Ms. Norris, he noticed the cat seemed to be frozen mid shriek, her hair standing up in several places. Harry was so captured by what he was looking at that he didn't hear the footsteps coming from behind him.

"What in Merlin's name is that!"

Harry instantly recognized the voice belonging to Slytherin beater Derik and turned around. What he wasn't prepared to see was practically all of Slytherin house in the corridor.

"Potter. What the bloody hell did you do?" Bole said a mixture of fear and awe in his voice.

"You son of a bitch, I'll kill you!"

Harry turned around in time to see Hogwarts' resident Squib launch himself at him. The squib caught him completely off guard and tackled him to the hard stone floor.

"I'LL HAVE YOUR HEAD FOR THIS POTTER!" Filtch raged.

"GET OFF ME YOU BLOODY SQUIB!" Harry shot back.

Filtch raised his hand to throw a punch when Dumbledore boomed, "ARGUS, RELEASE HARRY THIS INSTANT! He is not responsible for this."

Filtch looked at the headmaster and said, "Sir he knows I'm a Squib of course he's responsible for this."

As the commotion increased, more students arrived most of them Ravensclaws, Hufflepuffs, and Gryffindors. The sound of Dumbledore, Filtch, and Harry's voices must have echoed through the dungeons to the rest of the school. Along with the students, Snape, Lockhart, McGonagall, and Flitwick soon arrived.

"Argus get off of Mr. Potter." Snape barked.

Filtch finally got off Harry and went over by his beloved Ms. Norris.

"It appears as though the cat has been killed with the Woogawalsi curse. A pity hadn't I been here, I could have performed the exact counter spell that could have saved her." Lockhart said importantly.

"I want vengeance! I want Potter expelled!" Filtch said angrily.

"Argus, Harry could not have done this as I was with him when we made the discovery." Dumbledore said.

"He must have done it before hand and used you to prove his innocence." Filch said pointing an accusing finger at Harry.

"Harry was in London with me all day, Argus. We returned from the Wizengamot just minutes ago. I assure you that Harry did not do this." Dumbledore said hoping to pacify his caretaker and stop any rumors that might be starting.

"My cat is dead, Headmaster, someone must pay." Filch said moaning.

"She is not dead, Argus. Only petrified, but how I can not say." Dumbledore said as he continued to wave his wand over the petrified Ms. Norris.

"Alright all of you, shows over. Get to your common rooms unless you want detention for the next month." Snape barked at the massive group of students.

Everyone quickly departed except for Harry. He was still reading the words on the wall. Enemies of the heir beware the chamber of secrets has been opened. What is the chamber of secrets?

"Potter that includes you. Get out of here." Snape spat venomously.

Harry quickly nodded his head and left for the Slytherin common room. He was exhausted, but he knew he needed to speak with Draco and Blaise about the Wizengamot and now the chamber of secrets.

A/N 1. So what do you think about the outcome of the trial? Surprised that I let Harry lose at both Quidditch and the trial? What about how I transitioned into the Chamber of Secrets? Leave a review and let me know. The next chapter is going to be the reaction to the case. I know you will enjoy it.

A/N 2. Again thanks to my Beta Jon3776, who takes what I try to pass off as writing and makes it readable.

## Chapter 20

### Power of the Press

Harry was the last person to wake up and leave the Slytherin dormitory on Monday morning. His conversation with Draco, Blaise, and Ginny about the Wizengamot and the chamber of secrets had continued late into the night.

After a quick shower, Harry instructed Salazar to coil around his shoulders before he put on his robes. When his familiar assured him that he was comfortable, Harry departed to the Great Hall for a quick breakfast before potions.

When he entered the Great Hall, the entire Slytherin house stood up and started to applaud. Harry instinctively looked behind him to see if anyone else had entered the hall. Seeing that he was the one everyone in Slytherin was looking at and clapping for, he curiously made his way over to Blaise, Draco, Ginny, and Tonks.

"Okay, what the bloody hell is going on?" Harry asked as soon as he got there.

"Potter, I told you your case against Dumbledore would be huge. But then you went and made it into the story of the year," Blaise said as he handed Harry a copy of the Daily Prophet. Harry stared at Blaise curiously before he looked down at the headline and moaned.

The Harry Potter - Albus Dumbledore Feud!

Defeaters of The Last Two Dark Lords Square off!

By Rita Skeeter

Yesterday during the fall Equinox meeting of the Wizengamot, Harry Potter petitioned to have his Magical Guardian removed. Who is the Boy Who Lived's Magical Guardian, you ask? None other than the defeater of the Dark Lord Grindelwald, Albus Dumbledore!

Mr. Potter employed the legendary wizarding barrister Alexander Novitch as his appointed representative. Mr. Novitch attested that Albus Dumbledore not only tampered with privileged financial information and withheld it from Mr. Potter, but also took no active role as Mr. Potter's guardian.

What came as a further shock to this reporter was that Albus Dumbledore fully admitted to all of Mr. Novitch's accusations. The Chief Warlock claimed that he was attempting to look out for the Boy Who Lived by sheltering him from the burden of dealing with the Potter Estate. (We attempted to find out what the total amount the Potter Estate is worth; however, the Goblins at Gringotts refused to answer. Unofficially, second hand sources have claimed it to be among the largest in Europe)

Albus Dumbledore further claimed that revealing himself to Mr. Potter was unnecessary. He stated that as the Boy Who Lived currently lives with his Muggle relatives, informing him of his Magical Guardian would have served little purpose. Albus Dumbledore also mentioned that it would have drawn further attention to the already famous second year Hogwarts student.

The result of the case of the century, you might ask? Well, in one of the closest Wizengamot votes in the last forty years, Mr. Potter's request to have Albus Dumbledore removed as his guardian was defeated by four votes. Needless to say, Mr. Potter was less than thrilled about the results. When reporters caught up with him after the verdict, he was asked about his reaction to the vote. The future lord of the Potter house had this to say:

"You want to know what I think about the vote? I think it's an insult that Albus Dumbledore is still my Magical Guardian. I mean, the man has been absent my entire life and steals privileged information from me, yet a majority of the Wizengamot apparently thinks that's okay. Why exactly does the wizarding world seem to listen to whatever he says without second thought?"

Why indeed? This reporter is firmly with Mr. Potter on this issue. Had it been any other individual as his legal guardian besides Albus Dumbledore, they would have been removed instantly. Clearly, Albus

Dumbledore called in some very large political favors to insure that he maintained custody of young Mr. Potter. When Titus Ogden and several other senior Wizengamot officials were asked why they voted against Mr. Potter, they all gave the Prophet a no comment.

"Why exactly am I being given a standing ovation for that?" Harry asked, putting down the paper.

"Well, besides that fact that most Slytherins don't trust the bloody headmaster, you need to read the other articles," Blaise said, shoving the paper back towards Harry.

Harry curiously looked further down the front page and his eyes widened at the next article.

Harry Potter to Stay at Hogwarts

By Arnold Johnson

One would think that after the actions committed against Harry Potter by the Hogwarts headmaster, Mr. Potter would seriously consider transferring to a different Magical School. After all, Beauxbatons or Durmstrang would gladly accept the young man.

Apart from his reputation as the defeater of He Who Must Not Be Named, Mr. Potter is among Hogwarts' brightest students. Through a source at the Department of Education, I have received a copy of Mr. Potter's first year grades. The only class that Mr. Potter did not receive an Outstanding in was History of Magic. In every other class, he is among the top ten in his year.

Shockingly, the Boy Who Lived instantly denied any desire to transfer to a different magical school. He named his close friends and good relationships with his teachers as the main reason.

Among the teachers that Mr. Potter claims he is close to and greatly respects are the following:

Filius Flitwick. The Hogwarts resident Charms professor and head of Ravenclaw house for the last few decades is a well known and

respected Charms master who has received the Order of Merlin 2nd Class for his work on practical Charm application. He was Charmed Times magazine's Master of the Month for last December, and with the death of legendary Charms master Frederick Neinz, he is expected to take the top rank in the magazine's Power and Influence poll. Filius Flitwick is also the winner of five consecutive international duelling titles, as well as a recipient of Morgan's Staff for his advancement in Elemental Magic.

Minerva McGonagall. Considered one of the finest Transfiguration masters in recent history, Minerva McGonagall succeeded her mentor Albus Dumbledore as the Transfiguration teacher and Head of Gryffindor house at Hogwarts in 1947. Transfiguration Today has her listed as the second most powerful transfigurist in Europe behind the legendary Albus Dumbledore himself. Her work with Albus Dumbledore during the later part of the Grindelwald War (1938-1945) earned her the Order of Merlin 3rd class and Gryffindor's Shield for courage. She is also well known and praised for her essays on theoretical and practical Transfiguration.

Severus Snape. One of the youngest people to receive their mastery in the field of Potions, Severus Snape is the Potions Master and Head of Slytherin House (Mr. Potter's house) at Hogwarts. Severus Snape is Potions talented and is renowned for assisting in the creation of the Wolfsbane potion for Lycanthropy in 1983 with his brief mentor Nicholas Flamel. Among his many awards and achievements, Severus Snape has been named a Golden Brewer by Who's Brewing International, received the British Potions Mastery Award for Excellence, and won the summer 84' and 89' duelling competitions in Prague.

These three fine educators were mentioned specifically by Mr. Potter as those he has a good relationship with. However, when asked about his relationship with this year's defense instructor Gilderoy Lockhart, Mr. Potter claimed that he was, "the single worst teacher I've ever had at Hogwarts, and that includes Professor Quirrell, who attempted to kill me."

We at the Prophet are astounded by Mr. Potter's apparent dislike of the famous author. Before Mr. Potter could comment, though, as to

why he felt Professor Lockhart had been so terrible, his lawyer activated a Portkey taking him and his friend from the scene.

Harry looked up to ask a question when Tonks flipped the paper over to the back page where another story was printed. Harry's eyes widened when he read the headline.

Harry Potter's Revenge Against Albus Dumbledore!

Boy Who Lived Sinks Headmaster's Muggleborn Re-Education Act

By Rita Skeeter

How would you react if you learned that your Magical Guardian had kept his identity secret from you for twelve years and then stole privileged information? I think most children would probably cry, whine, complain, yell, or scream. Well, that goes to show that Harry Potter is not like most children. Instead of simply complaining and whining to the press, the future Lord Potter took his vengeance out on a much larger scale.

The last docket on the agenda for the fall Equinox session of the Wizengamot was the Muggleborn Re-Education Act. This widely controversial bill would provide forty thousand Galleons every year to allow for a better introduction into the Wizarding world for muggleborn witches and wizards. It was the hope of the bill's writers Lord MacMillan and Lord Dumbledore that this would allow for the transition to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry to be less daunting and thus improve the grades of muggleborn students.

The bill already had very staunch opposition from several prominent pureblood families. Many of them uniting for the first time to see that it would not pass. Among the strange political allies to stop this bill were legendary political enemies Lady Amelia Bones and Baron Anthony Parkinson. Lady Bones is a staunch supporter of helping muggleborns; however, she and many ministry department heads claimed that the sheer amount of money would be better spent elsewhere.

As the bill was brought up before the Wizengamot, practically every political columnist was predicting that it would pass. The Daily Prophet's own Mark Ownes was quoted in Sunday's paper as saying, "Even with the unusual alliance between Lady Bones and Baron Parkinson, it looks like the Muggleborn Re-Education Act will become law."

Well, what no political columnist could have foreseen was the legendary Harry Potter giving his opinion on the bill right before it was to be voted on. Citing the End of Line Clause of 1339, Chief Warlock Albus Dumbledore was forced to allow the future Lord to speak. Mr. Potter touched on Lady Bones' argument about the large amount of Galleons going to the project before pointing out before the entire Wizengamot that the top student in his year was a muggleborn by the name of Hermione Granger.

Mr. Potter also spoke of a fear of over-assistance to muggleborn students. Mr. Potter said, "If a muggleborn is able to be the top student at Hogwarts, they are obviously not at that much of a disadvantage. Besides, if we begin to give muggleborns extra help, where does that lead us? Will we soon be curving their grades just because they don't have a wizard parent?"

This argument sent the Wizengamot into chaos. The fact that a muggleborn student was the top student in Harry Potter's year at Hogwarts caused many of the arguments of the pro-muggleborn lords to dissipate. Also, several moderates began to question the enthusiasm of the pro-muggleborn lords. Lord Zabini has been quoted afterwards as saying, "I entered the hall prepared to vote for the bill; however, the thought of what this bill could mean forced me to reconsider my opinion."

Several Lords, though, accused future Lord Potter of exaggerating what the bill would do, and asked him to explain the fact that in his own year only one muggleborn was among the top ten students. Future Lord Potter took the question in stride and simply listed the top ten students in his year. He explained how many of the top students were the sons and daughters of very powerful individuals. Among the top ten students were Su Li, daughter of Chinese Ambassador and Charms master Chan Li. Harry Potter, himself. The first daughter of

the old pureblooded Patil family, the daughter of Lord Turpin, the niece of Lady Bones, the son of Lord Malfoy, and the son of Lord Zabini.

Mr. Potter closed his argument by saying that perhaps the problem wasn't that muggleborns were daunted by magic, but that they were just lazy. He went on to say, "That, however, happens to muggleborns, halfbloods, and purebloods alike, and doesn't warrant giving special help to muggleborns."

The final vote of 158-130 against the bill was a massive victory margin for the highly contested bill. While Mr. Potter denied speaking out against the headmaster's bill as an act of vengeance, we at the Daily Prophet can not help but think otherwise. Headmaster Dumbledore is widely accepted as a champion of muggleborn rights, and was rumored to have spent months working on this bill and gaining support for it with Lord MacMillan. If Mr. Potter wasn't seeking revenge, then he picked a very curious bill to speak out against, especially since his own mother was a muggleborn.

Harry set the paper down on the table. "Wow," he said weakly.

"I can't believe you spoke to the press. Did they misquote you at all?" Draco asked curiously.

"Err, misquote me? No. Although they did make up this whole feud, and they are way off on the whole revenge thing," Harry said.

"I can't believe you really said that Lockhart was the worst teacher you've ever had, including one who tried to kill you. That's just...that's just...you're a genius!" Blaise said before breaking down into fits of laughter.

"Blaise, stop it! This is serious. Harry, you do realize that every muggleborn in the school will hate you now, don't you?" Ginny asked.

Harry and Draco shared a look before laughing along with Blaise. When they regained their composure, Draco said "Like Harry cares what a bunch of stupid mudbloods think of him? The bill was a waste, everything Harry said was true."

"Yeah, and now maybe Madam Bones will get herself a Necromancer," Harry said with a grin.

"A Necromancer?" Tonks and Ginny asked, confused.

Harry, Draco, and Blaise quickly launched into a discussion about the argument at the beach and how Harry was planning on speaking out against this bill regardless.

"So you've been preparing for this since the summer?" Ginny asked, astonished.

"Yep, although I really do wish that Dumbledore could have been removed as my bloody Guardian," Harry said in annoyance.

"Well, if you really wanted him gone, why didn't you bring up the Dursl..." Tonks started.

"Shut up Tonks!" Harry barked, causing several people to stop talking and stare at him.

"Come on, Tonks, did you really expect him to bring that up in front of the entire Wizengamot? You do remember what he plans to do, right?" Draco said.

"Sorry, I guess I forgot for a second," Tonks said, a blush appearing for a moment before she used her powers to make it disappear.

"Don't worry about it," Harry said, waving it off.

"I guess you won't be telling us what that's about?" Blaise asked.

"Nope, sorry. Some things are just too personal, Blaise, even with Occulmency," Harry said.

"You know, my dad was really looking forward to that bill passing," Ginny said.

"Really? Too bad for him," Draco said, sarcasm dripping from every word.

"Draco, that's not nice to say!" Ginny said sharply.

"Why? Your dad is clearly a blood traitor. Helping muggleborns is stupid." Draco said.

"Draco, don't call my dad a blood traitor! We are proud of our history like any pureblood family. The fact that we don't have any problems with Muggles and muggleborns doesn't make us bad," Ginny said.

"No, it doesn't make you bad, Ginny, it makes you foolish," Harry said, earning a shocked and hurt look from Ginny.

"I'm not trying to be mean, Ginny, but let's be honest, Muggles are terrible people and muggleborns should just stay in their world," Harry said.

"But...but...Tonks, Blaise, you don't think like that too, do you?" Ginny asked.

"I understand why Harry thinks like that, so in a way I agree," Tonks admitted.

"No comment," Blaise said.

"No comment?" Ginny asked astonished.

"Zabinis are neutral as far as that stuff is concerned and I'm not about to go breaking the family stance on it," Blaise said.

Ginny just looked back and forth between her friends and shook her head, not knowing exactly what to make of it.

"Harry, did you really say Snape was one of your favorite teachers?" Tonks asked, trying to change the subject.

"They asked about him, and I wasn't about to make my life any harder at school by badmouthing him," Harry said.

"But Lockhart?" Blaise asked.

"He's not a teacher anymore, so what does it matter what I say about him?" Harry said with a grin as everyone, Ginny included, laughed.

While Ginny, Blaise, Tonks, and Draco started to argue about the most stupid thing Lockhart had ever done in class, Harry began looking around the hall. The first thing he noticed was that pretty much everyone at the Gryffindor table was staring daggers at him. Probably the angriest look he received came from Granger, though. Harry couldn't help but smile and wave at her. As soon as he did, her face turned red with rage and she walked out of the hall. Harry just smirked and continued to look around.

The Ravenclaws were all huddled around each other talking quietly. Every now and then one of them would look up at him. Harry spotted Su Li in one of the largest groups with the Ravenclaw Seeker Cho Chang, Terry Boot, and several third and fourth years. None of them seemed to want to make eye contact with him, so Harry looked over at the Hufflepuff table.

The Hufflepuffs like the Gryffindors were glaring at him. Harry spotted Ernie MacMillan and the two of them locked eyes. Harry had never seen a Hufflepuff in a towering rage before, but MacMillan looked like he wanted to walk over and challenge him to a duel. The only two Hufflepuffs that didn't seem upset were Susan Bones and Hannah Abbot. Harry caught their eyes and Susan waved at him with a smile while Harry just smirked, pointed to the paper, and rolled his eyes. Harry was glad that his friends didn't seem upset. When he thought about it, though, they had both been at the beach during the argument between him and Lord MacMillan, so they probably weren't too surprised. They also knew that he had felt this way before his case against Dumbledore, so it wasn't really an act of revenge.

Glancing up at the head table, Harry tried to judge each of his teachers' reactions to the articles. Harry was surprised to see Sinistra smirking from her spot at the far end, while Professor Sprout looked annoyed. Professor Binns of course wasn't present. Professor Flitwick caught his eye and Harry could tell that his favourite teacher

clearly wanted to get the whole story before he passed his judgment. Professor McGonagall seemed very annoyed and was doing her best to avoid his gaze. Professor Snape, though, looked as though Christmas had come a few months early. He was reading the paper with a grin on his face. Dumbledore, however, was acting as if nothing was the matter and was cutting a waffle with a huge smile on his face.

"Harry!" Tonks yelled.

"What? Sorry Tonks, what did you say?" Harry asked.

"I wanted to know if you knew anything about the Chamber of Secrets?" Tonks asked.

"Oh, no I don't. I mean, besides that whoever opened it seems to be able to petrify cats," Harry said with a grin.

"I've got Binns today and I'm going to ask him about it," Tonks said.

"Good idea. Think we should ask Snape or McGonagall?" Draco asked.

"Err, actually I think the articles put Snape into a good mood while McGonagall seems mad," Harry said after a quick glance at the staff table.

"Well, yeah, why wouldn't the articles make uncle Severus happy? The only time he is mentioned is when the Prophet is listing all the amazing things he has done and his awards. Not to mention that it says he's one of the three teachers you respect. Add on the fact that he hates Lockhart with a passion and you have the perfect way to make uncle Severus happy," Draco said with a grin.

"Yeah, while McGonagall has to read about how you and her mentor are at odds with each other, and by the looks of it, Dumbledore seems completely oblivious to it," Tonks said.

"So we ask Snape then?" Blaise asked.

"Sure, if he tells us to go screw ourselves then we'll ask McGonagall," Harry said.

"Okay, well I guess we should get to class then," Blaise said, standing up.

"Blaise, if it weren't for you, I don't think Draco and I would ever get to class on time," Harry said as he stood up as well.

"What are you talking about, Harry? Even with me telling you when it's time to go, you and Draco never show up to History of Magic," Blaise said with a grin.

Potions Classroom, Hogwarts

Harry and Draco took their usual spot at the front of the Potions classroom and quickly unpacked their stuff. They were discussing with Blaise how to bring up the Chamber of Secrets when the Gryffindors entered the classroom.

"Hey everyone, look, it's the Boy Who Thinks Albus Dumbledore Isn't Good Enough For A Guardian," Ron said loudly, earning several laughs.

"Shut up, Weasley. Dumbledore is nothing more than a thief. The Headmaster kept Harry's financial information from him. Of course, that wouldn't mean anything to you, would it? It's not like your family has any finances to be kept from them," Draco said as all the Slytherins roared with laughter.

Ron's face turned beat red. It looked like he was about to say something when the know-it-all beat him to it. "How dare you use my name and good grades to do your dirty work, Potter! That bill would have helped countless muggleborns with the transition to the wizarding world!" Granger yelled.

"Well, maybe if you didn't do so well, all the other mudbloods could have benefited. See, no one likes a know-it-all, Granger," Harry said as several Slytherins had tears running down their faces from laughing so hard.

"You bastard!" Hermione shouted as she took out her wand and sent a stunning spell.

Harry was at first surprised that the girl knew such advanced magic, but quickly pushed that to the back of his mind and cast the protego shield. Harry smirked as he watched Granger's eyes widen when her spell was reflected off his shield and shot right back at her. Granger had to drop to the floor to avoid the spell, causing it to smash the potions cabinet.

Harry was about to insult Granger when fate seemed to bless him. Severus Snape walked into the Potions lab, screaming at the top of his lungs.

"WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR DESTROYING THAT POTIONS CABINET?!" Snape bellowed.

"Potter, sir!" Weasley shouted.

"That's a lie! Sir, Granger sent a stunning spell at Harry and Harry cast a shield spell. Granger's spell bounced back at her and when she ducked it hit the potions cabinet," Draco explained quickly.

"Is this true?" Snape asked.

When every Slytherin and even a few Gryffindors, who clearly didn't like Granger, admitted that it was the truth, Snape turned on Granger. "You will have detention scrubbing cauldrons with me for the next month. Without magic. If there are no cauldrons to scrub, I will have Longbottom attempt to brew the Wolfsbane Potion. I'm sure that will manage to ruin a few cauldrons fairly quickly. Also, forty points from Gryffindor for fighting and destruction of school property," Snape said, sneering.

"Sir, can I ask a question before class starts?" Draco asked.

"As long as it isn't about those ridiculous articles in the Daily Prophet. Those stupid reporters left out several of my more recent achievements," Snape said arrogantly.

"It's not, sir, I wanted to know if you could tell us anything about the Chamber of Secrets?" Draco asked.

Immediately after the question was asked, everyone fell silent and waited for the Potions Master's answer.

Snape for his part just looked at his watch before saying, "Very well, we have four minutes before class. I will endeavour to explain the legend in that time. The Chamber of Secrets is supposedly a hidden chamber somewhere in the school. It is said that when Slytherin realized that Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff were going to side with Gryffindor and allow muggleborn witches and wizards into the school, he created the chamber. Supposedly, Slytherin left a way to enter the chamber with his heir, and something within the chamber would be able to cleanse the school of all who weren't pure of blood. Of course, no one has ever found this Chamber of Secrets, so it has become a bit of legend and is not believed to be real," Snape said.

"What exactly is in this Chamber? Could it petrify something?" Dean Thomas asked nervously.

"Don't worry your little muggleborn head, Thomas. The chamber is a myth, besides I don't think Salazar Slytherin would worry about petrifying a bloody cat, even if it did belong to a squib. If Salazar Slytherin did leave something, then I'm sure whatever he left would be lethal," Snape said as the bell rang.

"Now, everyone, thanks to Granger, our practical on the Nullification Potion has been pushed back, so take out your quills. We will be moving ahead and having our lecture on the great Potions brewer Boris Newman. Now, Newman was born in St. Petersburg in..."

Harry, however, wasn't paying much attention - he would get the notes from Draco and Blaise later today. He was so focused on what he had been told about the Chamber of Secrets. Only the heir of Slytherin can access it? But I'm the heir of Slytherin and I didn't do it. If I didn't do it and Voldemort is a Ghost, who could have done it? Maybe this was somebody's idea of a prank? Could someone have found out about the legend of the chamber, petrified the cat, and left the message as a joke? No, if a student did it, Dumbledore probably

would have recognized what petrified Ms. Norris and fixed it. Merlin, could someone have learned I'm the heir of Slytherin? Are they trying to set me up? No, only Draco and Tonks know about that and they would never say. Could someone have gotten it out of their minds? No, their Occulmency should be good enough to tell when someone is entering their mind now. Merlin, I need to figure this out!

An hour and a half later, Harry left the Potions classroom still trying to figure things out about the Chamber of Secrets. He was so deep in thought that he didn't notice Tonks and Draco calling his name.

"HARRY!" Tonks yelled, practically in his ear.

Harry jumped several feet from both the loud sound and shock. "Tonks, what the hell was that for?" He asked.

"I've been calling your name, chasing you down the hallway. Even Draco was calling you. You'll never believe what Binns told us about the Chamber of Secrets," Tonks said.

"Let me guess: that only the heir of Slytherin could open it and that inside there was a weapon to eliminate all the mudbloods in the school?" Harry said.

Tonks' mouth dropped open. "Snape told you?"

"Yeah, and it's been driving me nuts. I can't figure out if I'm being set up by someone or if this is all a big joke," Harry whispered quietly, so that only Draco and Tonks could hear.

"So what are you going to do? Do you think someone knows?" Tonks asked.

"I don't know. You two didn't tell anyone, did you?" Harry asked.

Draco and Tonks both shook their heads.

"I don't think your father said anything, Draco, but I'll have Andi ask in a letter anyway. Do you think anyone has entered your mind recently?" Harry asked.

"No, way I've been working on Occulmency every chance I get," Draco said.

"Me too, I'm on my tenth wall now," Tonks said.

"Okay, so if no-one said anything, let's assume that they don't know it's me. What would anyone have to gain by opening the bloody chamber, if this place exists at all?" Harry asked.

"You mean, besides ridding the school of the muggleborn trash?" Draco asked sarcastically.

"Filtch's cat wasn't a muggleborn, stupid!" Tonks said.

"But Filtch is a Squib, that's more embarrassing than a muggleborn. At least they can do magic," Draco said as they neared McGonagall's classroom.

"We'll talk about this later, okay?" Harry said as he and Draco entered the Transfiguration classroom. The two of them avoided their usual seats near the front of the room and instead sat in the very back. Blaise joined them a few moments later.

Harry was still thinking about the Chamber when he saw Granger enter the room. Deciding that he needed a distraction, Harry said, "Very nice work in Potions today, Granger."

Hermione's face immediately turned scarlet as she glared at him.

"Shut it, Potter," Dean Thomas said.

"Shut up, Thomas. You don't want to go insulting Slytherins with Salazar Slytherin's weapon on the loose, would you? Although you are a mudblood, so I guess you are as good as dead anyway," Draco said with a smirk.

"They'll just chunk all you Slytherins out if anyone is attacked, Malfoy," Ron said menacingly.

"I highly doubt that, Weasley, and if I were you I wouldn't be talking. The mudbloods will be the first to go, but after that it will be the blood traitors," Draco said with a huge grin.

"Mr. Malfoy, I will see you in detention tonight and twenty points from Slytherin!" the angry voice of Professor McGonagall said as she stepped into the classroom.

Harry watched as Weasley shot Draco a smug look before turning around. Harry just rolled his eyes at the idiotic Weasley and took out his second year Transfiguration book, which was actually his copy of Defensive Transfiguration.

&&&

When Minerva McGonagall woke up on the first of November, she was in a bad mood. She had stayed up till three in the morning trying to un-petrify Argus' cat with Albus, Filius, Severus, and the resident waste of a defense teacher. Unfortunately, nothing they tried seemed to have any effect on the poor creature. All they could do was to take it to the infirmary and have Poppy place it into a magically enchanted sleep. Of course, it looked the exact same; however, Poppy assured them that the potion was working.

As she entered the Great Hall for breakfast, the first thing she noticed was that every student seemed to have a copy of the Daily Prophet. She was slightly interested in seeing what was so important to the student population, but when she saw her colleagues reading the paper with the same enthusiasm as the students, her curiosity truly peaked.

"Filius, what is so interesting in today's paper?" she asked as she took a seat.

"Ah, well, Minerva, you do have to look for yourself," Filius replied as he handed her his copy of the paper.

At first, she couldn't believe her eyes. She even took her spectacles off, cleaned them, and put them on again just to make sure. However, the headline did not change. She quickly read the article in absolute

shock. She looked up to her long time friend and mentor, silently pleading with whatever Gods existed to make this a terrible lie. "Albus, tell me this isn't true?" She asked.

"I can assure you, Minerva, that the Prophet has exaggerated. I do not hold any animosity towards young Harry. Although I do believe he might have some towards myself; however, I hope not to this extent. Tell me, have you read all three articles or just the cover page?" Dumbledore said as he poured himself some pumpkin juice.

"Three? There are three of these?" Minerva said in shock. She quickly looked at the bottom of the page and sure enough, there was another long article. After she read the second article, Minerva didn't know what to think. On one hand, Harry had paid her one of the ultimate compliments by saying she was one of his favorite teachers; however, he also clearly insulted a member of the faculty. Even though Minerva did agree that Lockhart was a terrible teacher, Harry never should have gone to the press with it.

Deciding to go ahead and just read the last article now, she turned the paper over to the back page. As soon as she read the title, she clutched her chest in shock. He actually stopped the Muggleborn Re-Education Act! How could he! His own mother could have benefited from it!

As she continued to read the article, she was shocked to hear one of her favorite students argue against something she thought should have been implemented years ago. How could Harry say that this bill would lead to curving Muggleborn students' grades! That's just ludicrous! It never would have gotten that far!

When she read Harry's reasoning for only having one muggleborn among the top ten students, she tossed the paper aside. The sons and daughters of powerful people! Surely Mr. Potter doesn't believe that! If Lily and James could see this, they'd be screaming their lungs out. I don't believe this. Did I ever know Mr. Potter at all? How can he just say that the reason this happens is that Muggleborns are lazy? He can't truly believe this. The prophet must be right, he took out his revenge on Albus through this bill. How could Harry be so bloody

petty? What Albus did was bad, and he certainly doesn't still deserve to be the boy's guardian, but did Harry really need to punish every future muggleborn student to get back at him?

Feeling a level of contempt that she previously thought impossible to feel for a student, Minerva glared at the boy as he entered the hall and sat at the Slytherin table. The sound of one of the staff members laughing quickly shifted her attention.

"I fail to see what is so funny, Aurora," McGonagall asked with some bark.

"Oh, it's nothing, Minerva. I just enjoyed the articles very much," Professor Sinestra said with a grin.

Minerva spent the rest of breakfast annoyed. How she never saw the vindictive streak in one of her favorite students was beyond her.

Her first class did little to appease her anger. Her fourth year Gryffindor and Hufflepuff class wanted to do nothing but talk about the infernal Chamber of Secrets. Her problems didn't just end there though. With three minutes left till the bell rang, the Weasley twins managed to go and turn Kenneth Towler into a half human half canary. While she didn't see the twins actually do the deed, when no transfiguration counter curse seemed to work, Minerva suspected the twins gave him something that he ingested. They were known to slip things into people's food. Sighing, she dismissed the class early and levitated Mr. Towler to the infirmary.

"Poppy, are you here?" Minerva called out.

"Ah, Minerva, what can I...oh, dear Merlin, is that Mr. Towler?" Poppy asked in shock.

"Indeed. I believe the Weasley twins got him to eat something. Why anyone takes anything from those two at this point is beyond me," Minerva said, rubbing her temple.

"Are you alright, Minerva?" Poppy asked. "You look a bit peaky."

"Yes, well, I could do with a headache potion, Poppy," Minerva said.

"Why don't you levitate Mr. Towler onto a bed, and I will go get you one," Poppy said.

"Thank you," Minerva said as she moved Kenneth onto a bed.

"Here you are. How many more classes do you have today?" Poppy asked.

"Just one left, thank Merlin, although it is one I'm not looking forward too," Minerva admitted.

"Oh, what is it?" Poppy asked.

"Second year Slytherin and Gryffindors," Minerva said as she drank the potion.

"Ah, I take it that you are not looking forward to seeing young, Mr. Potter?" Poppy said knowingly.

"You always had good perception, Poppy. No, I'm not looking forward to seeing Mr. Potter. I just can't believe that he would take his revenge on Albus against every future Muggleborn in the wizarding world," McGonagall said.

"I quite agree, it was incredibly excessive; however, I think that..." Poppy was unable to finish her sentence, though, as the enchanted bell rang for the second time, signifying the start of class.

"I really must be off, Poppy. Leaving Gryffindors and Slytherins together unsupervised is a recipe for disaster," McGonagall said as she quickly swept out of the infirmary.

Using a series of secret passages known only to teachers, Minerva managed to get up to her classroom very quickly. As she approached the door, she heard the loud and unmistakable voices of Ron Weasley and Draco Malfoy.

"I highly doubt that, Weasley, and if I were you I wouldn't be talking. The mudbloods will be the first to go, but after that it will be the blood traitors," Draco said.

Minerva felt her blood boil. She hated all the blood purist ideals. "Mr. Malfoy, I will see you in detention tonight and twenty points from Slytherin!" she barked out angrily.

"Today, class, we will begin our lecture on turning rabbits into slippers. Now, who can tell me the basic theory to do so?" McGonagall asked as she surveyed the room. As she had expected, Hermione Granger, Draco Malfoy, and Blaise Zabini all raised their hands. She had quickly learned last year that after Mr. Potter, these three were most likely the most dedicated to transfiguration with the ability to perform it. However, two other hands joined her usual three students a moment later. She eyed Neville Longbottom and Pavarti Patil carefully before she said "Mr. Longbottom."

"Well, ma'am, in order to complete the transformation you need to implement Leshe's five rules of mammal Transformation..." Neville said.

Minerva was only half listening to the boy. Her eyes were locked onto the young Harry Potter. He and his friend Mr. Malfoy had vacated their usual seats for a spot near the back of the room. As usual the boy seemed completely engrossed in his Transfiguration book, something Minerva didn't buy for a moment. Harry was far too advanced to find anything in a beginner's Transfiguration book that interesting. Deciding that today was the day for her to find out exactly what he was reading, she said "Mr. Potter, would you agree with Mr. Longbottom's assessment?"

Harry for his part was stunned, Professor McGonagall had never asked him a question before in class. Hell, they had pretty much an unspoken agreement that on lecture days, he could do whatever he wanted as long as he stayed quiet. He was barely even listening to Neville. He stopped listening after he brought up Leshe's five rules for mammal Transfiguration. Deciding that Neville had probably gotten the answer right, Harry said, "Absolutely ma'am. In fact, I'm sure

Neville could provide a far more detailed explanation if you asked him for one.”

Harry watched as McGonagall pursed her lips. “Mr. Potter, could you please read the passage on rabbit to slipper Transfiguration out of the book?” McGonagall asked.

Harry was now officially panicked. Defensive Transfiguration didn't contain anything remotely close to transfiguring rabbits into slippers let alone the exact passage from his second year Transfiguration book. Somehow McGonagall must have figured out that he wasn't reading his transfiguration book. Why would she care though? It's not that big of a deal.

Harry knew that he had been caught, but hoped there was a way out. “I don't have to look at the book ma'am, I'll recite it with out it,” Harry said closing his book and putting it in the bag.

”You see, ma'am, the theory of turning a rabbit into a pair of slippers isn't all that difficult. It really should in fact be one of the...” Harry started to lecture.

”That is wonderful, Mr. Potter, however, I'm curious as to what your book has to say, not you.” McGonagall said as several Gryffindors snickered.

Realizing that he was boxed into a corner, Harry did the only thing that he could. He played the arrogance card. “Who cares about that shoddy book, professor? I mean, I could write a more thorough book on transfiguration theory! It's utterly pathetic when you think about it. No wonder good transfigurists like Theo and Neville struggle on the practical application. They are only given a fifth of the theory. You told me a few weeks ago that all this rabbit into slippers, rat into tea sets was just to weed out the weaker people. This is just another bit of catering this school does to muggleborns and the less talented. Maybe if they can't handle the full theory of something, they shouldn't be taught the bloody magi...” Harry said arrogantly.

“MR. POTTER YOU WILL SEE ME AFTER CLASS! And thirty points from Slytherin!” McGonagall said loudly as she seethed on the inside.

That arrogant boy! How dare he use something I tell him in confidence and throw it back in my face! Let alone in front of the entire class. Who died and made him king of magic? The school curriculum and books are chosen very carefully to help the most people without overwhelming them. Not everyone can read a five hundred page book on theory and grasp it like it is nothing.

Harry visibly relaxed when McGonagall started to call on other students and ignored him. Showing McGonagall a book that he legally wasn't supposed to own would have raised far too many questions. Harry saw that most of the Gryffindors were smirking, and most of the Slytherins were glaring at him for losing them points. Harry just shrugged his shoulders. He could care less about what his housemates thought, protecting his secrets was far more important than losing house points.

The rest of the class went by fairly smoothly, Harry was forced to take notes and pay attention since he didn't dare take out his Transfiguration book again. When the bell rang, Harry waited for most of the class to get up and file out of the room before he stood up.

"Harry, Blaise and I will be waiting in the hall for you," Draco said.

"Ok, Draco. Thanks," Harry said.

"Mr. Malfoy, be in my office tonight at 7pm for your detention," McGonagall said before Draco could leave.

"Err...yes ma'am," Draco said in annoyance as he closed the door.

Harry walked towards McGonagall, not breaking eye contact, his bag slung over his shoulder. "You wanted to speak with me, ma'am?" Harry asked.

"Don't act coy with me, young man. What you said today was completely out of line. How dare you bring up something I told you in confidence in front of the entire class! Where do you get off deciding the school's curriculum? And for that matter, what makes you think that the current curriculum caters to muggleborns?" McGonagall said sharply.

"I apologize, ma'am, I was completely out of line and I am sorry," Harry said honestly.

McGonagall was caught off guard by the suddenly apologetic tone. She was expecting a long drawn out fight with the young man over the school's curriculum. I don't understand, he was so passionately arrogant earlier about this. Why the sudden turn around? What's different? Think, Minerva! The boy is a Slytherin, so that means he doesn't do much on rash impulse. Merlin, these little buggers are hard to read. Think. Think. Think. What would Harry have gained from going off about the school's curriculum? Well, he knew that it would distract me. He knows my views on the current curriculum, but why distract me? Let's see, before he went off on his arrogant rant, I...I...I told him to read out of his transfiguration book. Merlin, that's it, he didn't want to read out of the book! He was trying to distract me from the book even before his rant. After all, he closed the book, and said that he didn't need it to recite the theory. When I told him I wanted to hear what the book said, that's when he decided to go off on his little tirade. That little Slytherin!

Harry was trying to act as though McGonagall's piercing stare wasn't affecting him, but in reality it was bothering him a great deal. He was expecting a quick thrashing and then a detention or two, not the silent treatment.

"Mr. Potter, let me see your Transfiguration book," McGonagall finally said after a while.

Harry felt his insides chill. No, I can't show her! I am not about to lose that book, it would raise too many questions and it's far too valuable to me. "No," Harry said, staring McGonagall right in the eyes.

After all the excuses Minerva had heard over the years, she thought that she had heard them all. She had, however, not once in her teaching career every had a student blatantly tell her 'no' to a direct command. "Excuse me, Mr. Potter? I told you to let me see that book," McGonagall repeated.

"No," Harry replied simply.

Minerva narrowed her eyes. How dare he! How dare he deny a demand by a teacher not once, but twice! Well, let's just see how much that book really means to him. "Fine, Mr. Potter, you either show me that book or consider your private lessons with me terminated from this day forward," McGonagall said icily.

Harry for his part was quite shocked at how quickly she went right to her trump card. This can't all be about a bloody book. Hell, she must have known I was reading something besides my transfiguration book for some time. I bet she's just mad at me for bashing her mentor in the paper. Fine, if she wants to play it that way, I don't need her for tutoring. What exactly did she ever do for me anyway? I can do the spells on my first or second try every time, and it's not like she is teaching me anything useful. Who needs to learn how to turn a Raven into a Goblet anyway. I can use the two hours a week to tutor myself in some offensive and defensive transfiguration. There are plenty of empty rooms in the dungeons. I would also have a lot more time to read ahead in the Animagus Transformation. Forget McGonagall, I don't need her!

Minerva watched as Harry's face showed shock at her request only to be replaced by a hardened face of indifference. She could practically see his mind looking for a way out of the situation. The longer Harry took to give her an answer, the more her curiosity about this book grew with every passing second.

"I guess our lessons are over then," Harry replied with determination.

McGonagall's jaw literally hit the floor as she watched one of her favorite and certainly most talented students turn his back to her. Her mind was racing. Part of her wanted to grab him and tell him she was joking while another wanted to give him detention for a month. In the massive amount of conflicting thoughts and emotions, she just stared as he opened her door and left.

Five minutes later, Minerva McGonagall was still sitting at her desk in deep thought. She couldn't imagine any book short of an illegal one causing the boy to throw away his private lessons. She knew how

much the both of them enjoyed it. She would have to speak to Mr. Potter about this when their tempers weren't running so high.  
Five Minutes Prior, Outside the Transfiguration room.

Harry Potter stormed out of McGonagall's classroom completely enraged and began making his way to the library. If I'm done with my lessons, I might as well inform Madam Pince. That way they can't say I took a book out of the restricted section without a note.

"Hey, Harry...err, tough break about the lessons, mate," Draco said hesitantly.

Harry for his part hadn't noticed that Blaise and Draco were walking with him. "What? I don't care about the lessons, Draco. I'm sick and tired of McGonagall," Harry said.

"Why didn't you just show her the book?" Blaise asked knowingly.

"Why do you think, Blaise?" Harry shot back.

"I think that your transfiguration book is probably a different book with a charmed cover on it. You certainly have the Charms skill to pull it off," Blaise said, ignoring Harry's tone.

"Well, ten points to Slytherin," Harry said sarcastically.

"So...err...what book was it?" Draco asked with a grin.

"Not one I would ever tell McGonagall that I had," Harry replied as he entered the library.

Draco just nodded as he and Blaise followed Harry up to the counter where Madam Pince was sitting.

"Madam Pince, I'm no longer receiving private lessons from professor McGonagall. I just thought I'd tell you so you could remove whatever copies of the Big Book of Transfiguration Professor McGonagall told you to set aside this week," Harry said.

Madam Pince was stunned. "Mr. Potter, why are you not receiving the lessons anymore?" she asked.

"Professor McGonagall cancelled them. I just thought I should tell you," Harry said simply.

"Surely you would want to read this week's chapter. I wouldn't tell her that you have it," Madam Pince said sincerely.

"I appreciate that, ma'am, but no. I wouldn't want McGonagall running to the headmaster and saying that I read a book from the restricted section without her permission," Harry said as he turned around and left a stunned Madam Pince.

"Err, Harry, why did you just do that? My father told me that book was practically the bible for Transfiguration," Blaise said.

"I already have the book in my possession, Blaise," Harry said with a grin.

Blaise was shocked. "How did you get it out of the restricted section?" he asked.

"I didn't, I got it over the summer as a birthday gift, but now that you mention it, Blaise; I think that section of the library has been left unexplored for long enough. Draco, I think you should write your father. Ask him if he knows any books that could help expand our knowledge of curses," Harry said quietly.

"How do you plan on getting into the restricted section? Madam Pince watches that area like a hawk," Blaise asked.

"Ah, Blaise, anything is possible at night," Harry said as he and Draco shared a knowing smile.

A/N: Well here is chapter 20. I'm sorry it took me so long to get out. I had some problems getting the chapter to my beta and then I wasn't able to get in touch with him for a while so I had to send it to someone else. I'd like to thank EvilDime for his help with this chapter. The next chapter should be out soon, I'm thinking first ten days of December. Please remember to leave a review.

## Chapter 21

### The Dueling Club

The month of November passed by quickly for Harry, Draco, and Tonks. For the first time Harry could remember, he had a lot of free time while at Hogwarts. Besides no longer having private lessons with McGonagall, Marcus Flint had decided to actually focus on passing his NEWTs to avoid a 9th year at Hogwarts. Because of that and the fact that Slytherin didn't play another Quidditch game till after Christmas break, Flint reduced the practice schedule to once per week.

Six days after Harry's argument and falling out with McGonagall, the Transfiguration teacher had asked him to stay after class and spoken to him about restarting his private lessons.

::Flashback::

"Please take a seat, Mr. Potter," McGonagall said.

Harry simply nodded and sat in an open chair.

"I wanted to speak to you and see if you had any desire to restart our private lessons," McGonagall said shortly.

Harry was caught off guard by the statement. He had been sure that she wanted to scold him for flaunting his abilities in class. Since their argument, Harry hadn't brought any of his advanced Transfiguration books to read in class just in case. Needless to say, the only thing that took his mind off how bored he was during Transfiguration was showing off his knowledge and practical abilities.

"Well, to tell you the truth, ma'am, I have not thought about it. I mean, as much as I appreciated the private lessons, I like what I'm doing now," Harry said honestly.

"Mr. Potter, I thought you had a desire to get a Mastery while you were still in school? Surely you realize that you'll be putting that in jeopardy," McGonagall said.

"I don't believe I am, ma'am. I believe I'll be able to do fine by myself. After all, I can do practically any spell correctly after only a few tries," Harry said arrogantly.

McGonagall was of course shocked at the boy's blunt answer. "Mr. Potter, I can assure you even with your natural gift for the subject, you need a mentor to guide you and show you what to do," she said.

"Really. Like Dumbledore was your mentor," Harry said sarcastically.

"That's Professor Dumbledore or Headmaster to you, Mr. Potter. You will treat your teachers with respect," McGonagall said shortly.

Harry instinctively narrowed his eyes. "No offence, ma'am, but the Headmaster has done very little to earn my respect. I noticed the day after the paper came out that you had a problem with what I said about the Headmaster. I don't believe we'll be able to work together because of your resentment of my opinions about the man. Good day," Harry said as he got up and left a stunned Minerva McGonagall sitting in her office.

::End Flashback::

Harry was very glad that Professor Flitwick didn't seem to be upset about the newspaper articles. They spent most of their first private lesson discussing it, and what had happened in Professor McGonagall's class, but Flitwick was nothing but supportive as he listened to what Harry had to say. After that, though, they never brought it up again and went back to practicing Charms.

Harry continued to improve at animation and Flitwick began to teach him how to control larger complex objects. So far though, the largest object Harry had animated was Flitwick's desk, which he made act like a horse and trot around the classroom with Flitwick riding it. While they advanced in their animation study, Flitwick also taught him some household charms to prepare food. Harry of course found the spell to

make knives slice, mince, and dice by themselves very interesting. While he was learning it, he fantasized about tweaking the spell so that they would instead attack the Dursleys. Along with the basic household charms, Flitwick showed him the spell to animate pictures from a camera, taught him the spell to animate objects while transfiguring them, and the theory behind making portraits talk and have personalities.

Besides Flitwick's private lessons, Harry had a ton of time to himself. He wasn't letting it go to waste, though. After his history class on Wednesday, he dedicated the rest of the day to practicing Occlumency. With no Quidditch practice to interfere, Harry was able to practice for a good nine or ten hours, and that was if he even bothered attending History. Combined with the time Flitwick gave him during class and after each private session, Harry was advancing quicker than even Salazar ever thought possible. At the beginning of December, Harry had 21 mental walls in place. In fact, Harry was starting to find that the hardest part of Occlumency was thinking of different types of walls to protect his mind. His last wall had taken on the image of the Berlin Wall, complete with graffiti that said 'Stay out, Dumbledore!'

During the two hour sessions that Harry would have had with McGonagall, Harry would go into an unused and empty classroom in the Dungeons and practice Transfiguration. After a few powerful Locking and Silencing Charms on the door, Harry would take out his copies of Defensive Transfiguration and The Big Book of Transfiguration. After he had all his books out, he would call Andi and ask for whatever objects he would need to transfigure.

Harry was advancing quicker than even he ever thought possible. In one month, he had managed to complete all the third year and almost half of the fourth year practical book lessons. He scoffed when he remembered how McGonagall had said he'd barely be able to finish fourth year by the end of the year.

Along with the basic school curriculum though, Harry also worked on controlling transfigured objects in a duel. The Big Book of Transfiguration described that the easiest creatures to conjure during a duel were dogs, cats, birds, or snakes. Harry, of course, found the

counter curses to dispel all the creatures, as well as several less known spells that would turn the creature into a more frightening version to be used by the person who transfigured it. The easiest of these spells were turning a snake conjured by the spell *Serpensortia* into a larger, more powerful snake by saying *Engorgio Transfigo Serpensortia* followed by the type of snake you wished it to turn into. The most mentally challenging of these spells was the spell *Engorgio Transfigo Avis*. Because the *Avis* spell sent out a large group of birds, the transfiguration was more difficult, as one had to concentrate on turning the entire flock of birds into a single larger creature.

Because of Flint's decision to reduce Quidditch practice, Draco also had a lot more free time on his hands. Harry and Draco decided, along with Tonks, Blaise, and Ginny, to spend their extra time each weekend working on more advanced offensive and defensive spells.

Draco had written home to his father asking for any books that might have a list of spells in them that they would be able to perform, regardless of whether it was in the restricted section. Lucius hadn't disappointed and provided them with the titles of three books, one in the restricted section and two in the main library, as good books to start learning.

Once Harry memorized the titles, he shifted into his shadow form after the library had closed and nicked the book from the restricted section as well as those from the main library. When Draco, Tonks, Ginny, and Blaise asked why he had stolen the two books that he could have just checked out, Harry simply answered that he didn't want Dumbledore knowing what he was up to. Soon Draco, Tonks, Harry, Blaise, and Ginny were often seen with their noses buried in the books *Advanced Jinxes*, *Cursing your Enemies*, and *Spells that Hurt*. Of course, Harry had charmed the covers, so to anyone else they appeared to be simple school books.

The last week of November, the five friends felt that they had learned enough to begin practicing against each other. So, on Saturday and Sunday mornings, they decided to get up early before breakfast and go to a very large unused lecture room in the Dungeons. They used only the spells they knew the counter-curses to, but since the five of

them had read different sections of the three books, they soon found themselves constantly facing spells they were unfamiliar with.

Harry had initially started to read the book *Cursing your Enemies*; however, when Flitwick let it slip that most curses and hexes were based on charms, Harry abandoned the book for *Spells that Hurt*, which was the most advanced book from the restricted section. Harry took a great deal of pride in being the only one who could really do the more advanced curses and counter curses. His reading of *Defensive Transfiguration* and *The Big Book of Transfiguration* also provided Harry with a lot more knowledge than the other duelists had. Because of that, Harry was the hardest duelist to strategize against. He could summon snakes or birds, overwhelm you with pain curses, or charm inanimate objects to attack you. All the while defending himself from basic jinxes and spells using simple transfigurations or the *Protego* shield.

Tonks was the second best duelist of the group. Her extra year of schooling allowed her to practice many of the reasonably advanced Jinxes and Hexes the two standard library books contained. Next to Harry, she probably had the second largest amount of spells available to use, and since her spells didn't require a lot of energy and focus, her strategy was to simply overwhelm her opponent through quick casting and keeping them on the defensive.

Unlike Tonks, Draco probably had the smallest spell selection. He, like Harry, had spent most of his time reading the book *Spells that Hurt*; however, he didn't have the advanced knowledge or natural aptitude for charms that Harry did. So Draco focused on the simple pain spells at the beginning of the book and tried to perfect them. His strategy in the duels was fairly simple. Hit an opponent with a pain spell, cause them to lose focus, and then follow with a stunner. As crude as his strategy seemed, it worked. While Draco never beat Harry and struggled against Tonks and Blaise, he was the duelist everyone liked facing the least, since they knew that, win or lose, they were going to be hurting afterwards.

Blaise was the most strategic of the lot, as well as the most rounded. He read passages from all three books, so he was well versed in curses, jinxes, hexes, and some mild pain spells. He would often

come up with very unusual combinations to attack with, that left his opponent constantly on edge. Blaise's only problem was that once his strategy was interrupted or thrown off, he wasn't the most agile and was easily stunned.

Ginny was the weakest duelist, and was only able to do spells out of the book *Advanced Jinxes*; however, she quickly proved that she was capable when she beat Draco by using a spell known as the Bat Bogey Hex. The spell caused a person's bogeys to turn into bat wings, which tore at the victim's face until they surrendered. When Harry, Draco, Tonks, and Blaise had asked where she found the hex as it wasn't in the book, Ginny said that her older brother Bill wrote her and gave her the spell when he found out about how Ron, Percy, and the Twins were treating her.

While Harry, Draco, Blaise, and Tonks all gave sympathetic smiles to Ginny, inside they were seething. After Ginny's brothers found her being tutored by Draco in Potions, they had started to constantly accuse her of family disloyalty. Ginny, of course, put on a strong face and told them to bugger off, but Tonks had told Draco, Harry, and Blaise that their accusations really did hurt her. Just some of what Ginny had to put up with on a daily basis was pranks from the twins, Ron's constant belligerent tongue, and Percy wanting nothing to do with her. On top of all of that, her mother wrote her and while she was supportive and offered words of encouragement, she subtly hinted that her father was disappointed about her being placed into Slytherin.

The conflict between Ginny and her brothers reached an all time high on the seventeenth of November, when Ron said loudly that he didn't consider Ginny a Weasley - in the middle of dinner in the Great Hall. This, of course, resulted in Ginny breaking into tears and running out of the room. Harry was sure that the teachers would have given Ron detention for a month had not Draco, Blaise, Harry, and Tonks all cursed him in front of everyone. Much to their shock, though, Professor Snape, McGonagall, and Dumbledore decided only to take away five points from each of them. Another shock came when Draco went to comfort the youngest Weasley when they found her crying in a secluded corner of the Slytherin common room. Draco never mentioned what he said to her, but whatever it was cheered Ginny up

immensely, as well as strengthened her resolve not only against her brothers, but also against her father, who had yet to write her.

Ginny wasn't the only person with problems, though. Harry and Dumbledore's non-existent relationship seemed to be the only thing the press had written about in the last month. Apparently, someone let it slip that McGonagall wasn't giving Harry private lessons anymore, and slowly a school wide rumor that Harry and McGonagall were arguing became front page news. According to the Daily Prophet, McGonagall had chosen to side with her old mentor over the bright young hero of the wizarding world. Harry actually partially agreed with that, but never told anyone, he didn't need to go confirming the Daily Prophet's ridiculous rumors.

After the story about the falling out with McGonagall, the Prophet ran a series of stories describing how Dumbledore was stopping Harry from transferring to Beauxbatons in France. Harry actually laughed out loud when he saw the front page that day. McGonagall though looked quite nervous as if she wasn't sure if it were true or not.

Dumbledore, for his part, never seemed to notice the bad publicity he received, but kept his distance from Harry. Truth to be told, the two hadn't spoken since Halloween, but if you believed the Prophet, they were constantly arguing and at each other's throat.

Harry actually was wishing that something would take the student population's mind off a non-existent relationship between Harry and Dumbledore. Everyday, he was pestered by Gryffindors, Ravenclaws, and Hufflepuffs asking what his problem with Dumbledore was.

Unfortunately, the only thing that students were even briefly interested in besides Harry and Dumbledore's apparent feud was the Chamber of Secrets. Since there hadn't been any more petrified pets or cryptic messages, everyone had started to chalk it up to a very elaborate prank. Several people even suggested that it was the Weasley twins who did it. Harry laughed when he heard that rumor. He pointed out that the twins didn't have enough brain cells to stump Dumbledore or to have studied enough about Hogwarts to find out about the Chamber of Secrets.

Harry, though, had bigger problems than a non-existent relationship with his headmaster. The bigger problem's name was Gilderoy Lockhart. After Harry blasted him in the paper as the worst teacher he'd ever had, the man had made it his personal mission in life to make Harry read every single passage from his books in front of the class. Lockhart apparently thought if Harry read about all his supposed deeds over and over again, he would start to believe them. For Harry, it was pure agonizing torture. When Harry went to Professor Snape to complain, Snape just told him in a shockingly sympathetic tone that a professor could ask whoever he wanted to read during class.

Transfiguration was another class that Harry wasn't enjoying. Where once he used to be able to read ahead in his books, he was now forced to take notes during the class in order to stay awake. Of course, Harry got back at McGonagall by raising his hand to just about every question and giving such a detailed answer that his year mates were left scratching their heads. Because McGonagall was a fair teacher, she had to award him at least twenty points for each of his thorough answers. It had become a running joke in Slytherin to not raise your hand even when you knew an answer in Transfiguration. Even if McGonagall only called on Harry four times a class, that was still eighty points to the twenty or thirty they would have otherwise earned.

Harry practically never attended History of Magic anymore, which made his Acceptable in the class even more impressive. He told Professor Binns that his Goblin financial advisor and him were only able to meet on Wednesdays during history class, but if he ever didn't have a meeting he would try to attend. The entire class was shocked when Binns seemingly waved off the excuse and told him that it was fine as long as he got his work in on time.

Charms was Harry's favorite class as he either got to show off advanced animation with Flitwick, practice Occlumency, or read ahead in his book on Advanced Charms Theory. On the practical days, Harry had to assist anyone having trouble. Since the Slytherins had Charms with the Ravenclaws, Harry rarely had to assist them. Every now and then, he would try to strike up a conversation with Su Li, but the girl didn't ever have anything to say.

Astronomy was still a fun class, although Harry rarely put forth much effort in it. In fact, Astronomy was the only class where Harry's grade started to slip. He still had an Outstanding, but even Sinistra told him that she thought he could be doing better. Once Harry told a few simple lies about how he was annoyed with all the stuff the paper was saying about him, Sinistra smiled and told him that she understood it was an annoying problem to deal with.

Harry was actually pleased that he seemed to be doing well in Potions this year without as much help from Draco. While he still appreciated all the help Draco gave him during the practical lessons, Harry found that he was starting to understand the theory of Potions better. His grades on essays were now consistently an Exceeds Expectations or Outstanding. Even Snape had noticed and told him that his written work showed that he was at least passably literate.

Herbology was another subject Harry felt he was doing a lot better in this year, as opposed to last year. With Neville as his partner, Harry couldn't help but learn a fair bit about the subject. While he could never hold a candle to Neville as far as Herbology went, he would get an O and probably end up being third or fourth in the school.

December 9th Great Hall, Hogwarts

"Hey," Harry said as he sat down for lunch.

"So, did you hear?" Tonks asked.

"Did I hear what?" Harry asked.

"Harry, you know you should check the notice board before you leave the common room," Draco said as he handed Harry a flyer.

Harry took the flyer and looked at it. "So what? We have our own dueling club, why do we need to go to this one, too?" he asked.

"Harry, it could be useful to hear what other people have to say. We might even pick up a few new spells," Ginny pointed out.

"Maybe. Who's running it?" Harry asked.

"Lockhart," Draco said in annoyance.

Harry choked on his pumpkin juice. "Lockhart. You want to go to a dueling club being run by that phony? Have you all lost your mind?" Harry asked.

"Well, if you had bothered to read the entire flyer, you would have seen that Professor Snape is his assistant," Tonks said with a smirk.

"Snape is Lockhart's assistant. Are you kidding me? Snape won two bloody dueling championships! Why would he be the assistant of that piece of dragon dung?" Harry asked in shock.

"Dunno, but it says here they will have several practice duels to demonstrate proper technique to people," Draco said as a smile crept across his face.

It took Harry a moment to put what Draco had said together. "Wait...wait just a minute. Snape is going to duel Lockhart?" Harry said with glee.

When everyone nodded their heads, Harry burst out laughing. "Then yes, yes we are going. I can't wait! When is it?" Harry asked.

"Saturday; we'll have to put off our dueling practice that day. I want to be in top form to curse the twins," Tonks said, smiling.

Harry just smiled back at Tonks. "Oh yeah. Do you think that Snape will let us duel with all the spells we know? I would love to introduce Ron to some of the curses I don't use on you guys," Harry said maliciously.

"No Harry, Ron is mine. I've actually already spoken to Professor Snape, and he promised to let me duel him in front of the entire school. He didn't want to at first, but when I demonstrated several of the spells I knew already, he was all too willing to let me embarrass my older brother. After all, an ickle first year shouldn't be able to beat someone older than them," Ginny said menacingly.

"Ah ok, well, I guess I'll take whichever twin you don't get, Tonks. Who are you all looking forward to dueling?" Harry asked.

"Thomas. I'm going to put the Mudblood in the Hospital Wing so that I don't have to tutor him on Sunday," Draco said with a feral grin.

"Granger," Blaise said simply.

"Really? I thought you didn't have a positive or negative opinion about Granger, Blaise? You know, the legendary Zabini neutrality," Harry pointed out.

"Oh, that hasn't changed. I just want to duel someone who can think like myself, and she has a sharp mind. I think it'll be a challenge," Blaise said.

Harry just nodded his head at that.

"Harry, don't you have tutoring soon?" Tonks asked, looking at her watch.

Harry moaned. "Why did you have to remind me? I swear I'm going to kill Creevey with my bare hands," Harry said as he quickly ate the rest of his food, said goodbye, and made his way to the library.

Once inside the library, Harry spotted the annoying first year Gryffindor Mudblood sitting at a table by himself. When Harry sat down, Creevey had his usual stupid grin on his face.

"Hiya, Harry. So, what do you want to start with today? I mean, I know we are suppose to be making objects fly and I'm not that great at it, so I thought we'd start there, but you're the tutor, I guess. So what do you think?" Colin asked quickly.

"Creevey, read the theory behind making an object fly for the first twenty minutes," Harry said icily.

"I already read that while I waited for yo...", Colin said.

"Then read it again," Harry snapped.

"Er...okay, yeah, I guess that makes sense. Make sure I know it. You're the best tutor, Harry," Colin said with a grin that made Harry want to vomit.

While Creevey was reading, Harry took out his diary on the Shadow Mage and began yet another attempt to try to figure out how to summon a Lethifold. He had started to write out as much of the theory behind summoning the creatures as he could before Le Roché went off on some bizarre tangent. While he didn't have a lot of information on the theory, it was far more concise and easier to read than Le Roché's journal.

Exactly twenty minutes later, Creevey put his book down and said, "Okay, so now what do you want to do?"

Harry checked his watch, closed the book on Shadow Mages, and stowed it in his bag. "Alright, Creevey, take out your wand and say 'Volo'," Harry commanded.

Colin excitedly took out his wand and quickly said the incantation.

Harry could only roll his eyes when the feather didn't even budge. "Watch my wand movement, Creevey," Harry said as he demonstrated the subtle flick and twist of his wrist.

Colin nodded his head and tried again, and again, and again, and again. After nearly thirty minutes, Harry had corrected his wand movement seven times, his pronunciation eight times, and yet the first year still couldn't do the spell. The feather hadn't so much as budged in a half an hour. Putting his fingers to his temple, Harry was doing his best to fight off a headache. He wasn't surprised at the boy's pathetic spell work, it did take him to the middle of November to do the Levitation charm after all. "Okay, Creevey, let's call it quits for today. I want you to work on this in the common room tonight. If you are having any problems, ask Granger for help," Harry said.

"But we still have another hour," Colin said.

"I know, but I need to go to Madam Pomfrey for a headache potion," Harry said.

"Oh, okay. Hope you feel better soon, Harry," Colin said as he gathered his stuff and quickly left the library.

When Creevey was officially out of earshot, Harry mumbled, "feeling better already." His headache, though, wasn't going away as fast as Creevey, so after he slowly packed up his books, he left the library and decided to actually go get that headache potion. Not only would it solidify his alibi if Flitwick asked, but he could use one.

He slowly walked up several flights of stairs, and made his way to the Hospital Wing.

"Hello, Madam Pomfrey?" Harry called out.

"Ah, Mr. Potter. What can I do for you?" the matron asked, stepping out of her office.

"Headache potion, ma'am," Harry said.

"Of course, here you are, dear," Madam Pomfrey said, handing him a blue vial.

Harry quickly downed the contents and his head started to feel instantly better. "Thank you, ma'am, I needed that," Harry said.

"Yes, well, I'm glad I haven't seen as much of you this year as I did last year, Mr. Potter. Do try to only stop by for headaches," Madam Pomfrey said.

"I'll do my best, ma'am." Harry said with a smirk.

"Well, that's good, now is there anything else?" Madam Pomfrey asked.

"No, that's all. Thank you again," Harry said as he left the Hospital Wing.

Since he was still a little hungry from his abrupt lunch, Harry decided to check out the kitchens and grab some food. He could always ask Andi to bring him anything, but he hadn't been back to the kitchens this year.

As Harry walked down a staircase to the second floor, he wasn't looking where he was going and he bumped into somebody on the landing. "Sorry," Harry muttered before he looked up. As soon as he saw who he bumped into, though, his blood ran cold. Standing on the landing with his camera in front of his face was a completely petrified Colin Creevey.

"Oh Merlin!" Harry shouted in shock.

As Harry inched closer to get a better look at the boy, Harry saw that just like Filch's cat, he was frozen in a state of fear. His tense shoulders and the look of absolute terror on the boy's face behind his camera proved that. Oh Merlin, I've got to get Madam Pomfrey, I've got to do something! No bugger that, I can't be found at the scene of another petrification, I need to get out of here now! Let someone else find the stupid Mudblood.

Just as Harry was about to turn away from the frozen boy, a shrill scream came from the stairs above him. He turned to look and saw Pavarti Patil and Lavender Brown staring at him in horror. Just great, the two biggest gossips in the entire school. "You two stay with Creevey, I'm going to go get Dumbledore," Harry barked, but the two girls just screamed and ran away from him in terror.

"Great, now I need to get a teacher," Harry muttered as he ascended the staircase, quickly raced down the corridor, and entered the infirmary. "Madam Pomfrey!" Harry shouted quickly.

"What is it now, Mr. Potter?" Madam Pomfrey asked, coming back out of her office.

"There's been another petrification. I found Colin Creevey frozen on the landing between the second and third floor," Harry said quickly.

Harry watched as the matron's face quickly paled and her eyes widened. "Mr. Potter, is this a joke?" she asked quickly.

"No, ma'am. I figured you were the closest teacher, so I came back to get you," Harry said.

"Very well, let's go. I want you to tell me everything," Madam Pomfrey said as she grabbed her wand and some potions.

"Well, I was just heading down to get some food when I bumped into somebody. I said sorry and then when no one spoke in return, I looked up. Creevey was just frozen in the middle of the stairs with his camera out," Harry told her as they walked down the corridor. When they turned the corner to go down the stairs, though, practically every Gryffindor was there.

"There he is, expel him!" the voice of Ron Weasley yelled.

"Mr. Weasley, you will be quiet!" The sharp voice of Minerva McGonagall cut through the crowd, silencing everyone quickly. "Mr. Potter. Ah, Poppy, thank Merlin you heard."

"Mr. Potter just came and got me, Minerva, I understand Mr. Creevey has been petrified," Madam Pomfrey said as she tried to force her way down the stairs and past all the angry looking Gryffindors.

"Yes, I've sent for the headmaster, he should be here in a moment," McGonagall said.

"I am already here, Professor McGonagall," the calm voice of Albus Dumbledore echoed up the stairs.

Everyone, even Harry, turned to look as the aged old professor walked up the staircase with Professor Snape in tow. "I was in a meeting with Severus when we got your message. Poppy, is there any difference between this and Argus' cat?"

Madam Pomfrey waved her wand over Creevey a few times before stopping. "No, Professor. It's exactly the same," she said.

"How very curious. Who found him?" Dumbledore asked.

"That bloody Dark Wizard right there! Lavender and Pavarti said they caught him in the act of petrifying him," Ron shouted as the Gryffindors started to scream for Harry's expulsion.

Harry for his part knew that he wouldn't be getting expelled; he could always make a wizard's oath to prove he didn't do it. However, one didn't get the chance to ridicule the entire Gryffindor House very often. "As always, you Gryffindors are completely idiotic. I didn't petrify Creevey, I just found him....," Harry said.

"A likely story. Tell me, why did you run away from the scene of the crime, then?" Lavender barked.

"Oh, I don't know, maybe because I told you two to stay with him while I went and got a teacher? Of course, Gryffindor nerve being what it is, you and your other idiot friend ran off. Gryffindor courage at its best, I'd say," Harry said, earning a slight laugh from Snape, a reproachful look from Dumbledore and McGonagall, and a glare from every Gryffindor present.

"Why would they stick around so you could petrify them as well?" Seamus Finnegan yelled.

"Oh yes, Finnegan. In my second year at Hogwarts, I discovered a means of petrification the likes of which the headmaster has never seen before. That's such a likely possibility," Harry said sarcastically.

"Harry, why don't you just tell us what happened?" Dumbledore asked.

"Sure. As I told Madam Pomfrey, I was heading down to grab some food....," Harry said.

"He's lying! Everyone knows there are quicker ways to the Great Hall!" a sixth year Gryffindor shouted.

"Not the Great Hall, you idiot. I was going to the kitchens," Harry barked, causing the Gryffindors to all fall silent.

"Anyway, like I said, I was going to get some food when I bumped into Creevey here on the landing. Brown and Patil showed up and I told them to stay with the body while I went to get a teacher. They, however, being the stupid, narrow minded gossips that they are, decided that running away and informing all of Gryffindor tower was the better idea..." Harry said.

"Mr. Potter, five points from Slytherin," McGonagall said.

"Twenty-five points each from Patil and Brown then, Minerva. Clearly, your two brave Gryffindors couldn't find the fortitude to stay with a petrified body, and instead decided to spread rumors. I think that's a fair punishment," Snape said as McGonagall's eyes narrowed.

"Harry, what happened after that?" Dumbledore interrupted them.

"I went and got Madam Pomfrey, told her what happened, and brought her down here," Harry said simply.

"Poppy, does that match what Mr. Potter told you?" Dumbledore asked.

"Yes, Headmaster," Madam Pomfrey said as she continued to run spells on the petrified boy.

"Very well. Clearly, you were just in the wrong place at the wrong time, Harry. Please go back to the Slytherin common room. I'm sure your house elf will be able to provide you some food if you are still hungry," Dumbledore said.

Harry just nodded and walked away from the still angry Gryffindors.

&&&

Two days had passed since the petrification and it seemed like the school could talk of nothing else. While Dumbledore made it known that Harry did nothing wrong, most of the school, especially the Gryffindors, thought otherwise. People would constantly shrink away from him in the hallway and refuse to meet his eyes during class. Harry really didn't care though, he actually liked not being pestered

by people. Harry was just glad that the story hadn't made it into the newspaper.

While Draco found Harry's problem to be very funny, and encouraged him to scare first years as the evil heir of Slytherin, Blaise simply ignored it like nothing had happened.

Tonks, though, couldn't ignore it. She had always been an outcast in her house. Apart from Hermione and sometimes Neville, no one really bothered to speak to her when it wasn't about Quidditch. However, when she cursed a group of Gryffindors who were talking about trying to get Harry expelled, it seemed like the entire house unified against her. The twins even started a Ban Tonks from the Tower campaign. The idea was to periodically switch the password to the Fat Lady without informing Tonks, effectively keeping her out of the Gryffindor common room. This actually worked, since Neville could barely remember the password anyway and Hermione was often not informed of the switch because of her close relationship to Tonks. Eventually, McGonagall found out, though, and took 30 points each from the twins as well as revoked the prefect status from the fifth year prefect who was constantly changing the password.

Ginny also had to deal with an increase of accusations from Ron, Fred, George, and even Percy. Over the last forty-eight hours she had been relentlessly pranked and verbally abused for siding with Harry. She told Harry, Draco, Tonks, and Blaise that the only thing keeping her sane was the thought of hexing Ron during the dueling club.

Luckily, Saturday came quickly and Harry, Tonks, Draco, Blaise, and Ginny all made their way down to the Great Hall, which had been expanded to hold several dueling platforms. As Harry and his friends entered the Hall, everyone quickly got out of Harry's path.

"Well, it looks like we're going to get a good view thanks to you, Harry," Tonks said with a smile.

"Just one of the perks of being thought of as the deranged heir of Slytherin," Harry responded as Lockhart took the stage.

“Thank you all for coming to the dueling club! I am, as you all know, your Defense teacher and five time winner of Witch Weekly’s most charming smile, Gilderoy Lockhart,” Lockhart said with a broad grin.

”Pompous ass,” Draco muttered.

“I would like to introduce my assistant today, your Potions Master, Severus Snape. I understand that he has some experience as a dueler and while he didn’t bring down the Kentwood werewolf, do listen to him,” Lockhart said, flashing a smile again.

”Some dueling experience?’ I guess winning two international dueling competitions isn’t nearly as impressive as lying in a book,” Draco said loudly, causing Harry, Tonks, Ginny, Blaise, and all the other Slytherins to laugh.

“Thank you, Mr. Malfoy, but I will let my record stand for itself,” Snape said flatly, although he flashed his godson a rare grin as he took his place next to Lockhart.

“Err, yes, now then, we are going to start off the day by having a small duel between Professor Snape and myself. So, Severus, if you will take your place opposite me,” Lockhart said as Snape casually walked to the spot opposite Lockhart on the dueling platform.

“Now, first we bow,” Lockhart said and went into an exaggeratedly deep bow. “Now, if Professor McGonagall will signal for the start of the duel,” Lockhart said.

McGonagall simply shot off red sparks from her wand. A moment later, Snape barked “Expelliarmus.” The Disarming spell slammed into Lockhart and threw him clear across the platform, while all the Slytherins cheered for their head of house.

“Ah yes, the Disarming spell. Good show, Severus. Now, of course, I let it hit me. If I really wanted to block it, I would have simply deflected it, naturally; however, it is a good spell to show them first. Now how about we have some volunteers try the spell. Ah, Mr. Potter, Mr. Malfoy, why don’t you get up here and give it a try?” Lockhart said.

"No, Gilderoy, it would be a waste of both Mr. Potter and Mr. Malfoy's time to do such a simple spell. I believe you should call upon...Ron Weasley and Dean Thomas," Snape said as the Slytherins laughed quietly at the subtle insult.

"Ah, yes, right you are, Severus. Mr. Thomas, Mr. Weasley, why don't you get up here?" Lockhart called.

Harry watched as Weasley and Thomas each used the Disarming spell on each other. Neither of them had a good command of the spell and often they would fire over their opponent's heads. Ginny was probably having the best time laughing as her older brother struggled to use a spell she mastered earlier in the semester.

After a good five minutes of Lockhart going on about how well Weasley and Thomas did, Snape decided that he'd had enough and said, "I have with me a piece of parchment. Should anyone wish to challenge someone they may approach and write their name down and the person they wish to challenge. I fully expect most of the people challenged to refuse, especially the Gryffindors challenged by the Slytherins. You are only allowed to challenge someone within two years of your own year. You will, of course, not be looked down upon should you not wish to duel. Now, due to time restrictions, we will only have ten challenges. Also, someone may only be challenged once. The line to make a challenge will begin after Ms. Weasley," Snape said.

Harry was laughing outright as he got behind Ginny, Tonks, Draco, and Blaise. In one move, Snape basically called all the Gryffindors cowards, assuring that they would meet any challenge, especially from a Slytherin. When it was Harry's turn to approach the list, he looked at the first few names.

Ginny Weasley Vs Ron Weasley

Nymphadora Tonks Vs Fred Weasley

Draco Malfoy Vs Dean Thomas

Blaise Zabini Vs Hermione Granger

Harry just smirked and wrote his name and George Weasley.

Instantly, the parchment updated itself and Harry saw his and George Weasley's name appear after Blaise and Granger.

When Harry was done, he joined Tonks, Ginny, Draco, and Blaise and waited for everyone to fill out their challenges. Five minutes later, everyone who wanted to challenge someone had done so and Snape took the parchment.

"The first challenge is from Ginny Weasley of Slytherin to Ron Weasley of Gryffindor," Snape said with a smirk.

Everyone heard Ron shout out in shock at being challenged by his younger sister.

"Clearly, Mr. Weasley is too frightened to take on his younger sister, so I suppose we shall move on to the next challenge between Nym....," Snape said.

"I'm not scared of my slimmy Slytherin sister. If she wants to get embarrassed, that's fine with me," Ron spat as he pushed his way forward and climbed up on the dueling platform where Ginny was already standing.

"You will bow, take your stance, and then begin on Professor McGonagall's signal," Snape said.

Ginny and Ron both followed Snape's orders and waited for McGonagall who a moment later shot off red sparks.

"Expelliarmus!" Ron shouted.

Ginny just watched as the Disarming spell shot out of her brother's wand and flew a good three feet over her head. "You know, Ron, I think you are supposed to try to hit the person with your spell," Ginny commented sarcastically.

Ron flushed red with embarrassment and Ginny immediately sent off her Bat Bogey Hex, along with several other troublesome jinxes.

All of Ginny's spells struck Ron in either the chest or the head. Soon the youngest male Weasley had bat wings coming out of his nose beating him across the face, puce balls forming on his arms, and was on the ground vomiting slugs.

"Minerva, I do believe Mr. Weasley has been defeated, wouldn't you say?" Snape said.

"I would have to agree. Ms. Weasley, would you be kind enough to perform the counter curses?" McGonagall said sharply.

"Of course, ma'am," Ginny said as she waved her wand. Instantly, the bat wings disappeared, the puce balls shriveled up and vanished; however, Ron didn't stop vomiting slugs.

"The last spell, Ms. Weasley;" McGonagall said.

"Sorry ma'am, but that spell can't be undone until it runs its course. He should be fine in a few hours," Ginny said with a satisfied smirk as she walked off the stage, looking very smug with herself. Ron, however, was staring daggers at his sister as he was taken to the Hospital Wing by Seamus and Neville.

"The next duel is between Ms. Nymphadora Tonks of Slyther...pardon me of Gryffindor and Mr. Fred Weasley of Gryffindor," Snape said.

Tonks flashed Snape a smile as she made her way onto the platform followed by Fred, who received a loud cheer.

As soon as all the formalities were done, and McGonagall sent up sparks, Tonks went on the attack. She quickly began casting every jinx, hex, and curse Harry had ever heard her use before. Fred was so unprepared for the onslaught of spells that all he could do was put up a pathetically weak Protego spell, which crumbled after stopping the first three hexes.

Soon, Fred was lying on his back with hex marks all over his face. His body, though, was covered in sores, bruises, burns, and puncture marks. He had no hair and his bald head was covered with acne and popped puce balls. As the entire hall fell silent in shock, Harry, Draco, Ginny, and Blaise's laughter was heard by everyone.

"Good show, Tonks. Twelve seconds, a new record!" Draco shouted.

"Ms. Tonks, what spells did you use on Mr. Weasley?" McGonagall asked, standing up.

"I lost count, ma'am. I know I used a few Skin Charring hexes, Puce Bubble jinx, Jelly Legs hex, the Stunning spell, the Hair Loss hex, the Blindness jinx, the Bone Sore spell, the Skin Sore spell, the Acne hex, and a few Bruising curses," Tonks listed off on her fingers.

The entire hall was silent as they listened to Tonks list off the impressive collection of jinxes, hexes, and mild pain spells.

"Where did you learn all those spells? Not to mention the fact that you should have known not to use that many jinxes, hexes, and curses together. It could have serious effects," McGonagall said shortly.

"It was a duel, ma'am. It's not my fault he didn't properly defend himself," Tonks said with a grin as she climbed off the stage.

McGonagall herself took Fred to the Hospital Wing while Professor Flitwick took her spot to judge the duel.

"That was brilliant, Tonks, congratulations!" Draco said as he walked forward to take his place on the dueling platform.

"The next challenge is from Draco Malfoy of Slytherin to Dean Thomas of Gryffindor," Snape announced.

Dean gulped nervously before making his way onto the platform.

"On my signal, boys," Flitwick said as he fired off some red sparks.

Dean attempted to follow Tonks' strategy and immediately launched every minor jinx he knew at Draco. However, having duelled with Tonks, Draco knew most of the jinxes and hexes Thomas tried to use against him and quickly cancelled them out before going on the offensive.

Harry watched as Draco played with Dean for a good four minutes. Draco hit Dean with Skin Sore spells, Bruising hexes, even some rather painful Puncture spells. By the time Draco got bored and hit him with a Stunner, Dean was bruised from head to toe and barely able to remain on his feet.

Again, the entire hall was silent as Dean was carried to the Hospital Wing.

"The next challenge is from Blaise Zabini to Hermione Granger," Snape said.

Blaise stood up on the platform and waited.

"Is Ms. Granger going to duel?" Snape asked.

"I don't think she's here," Lavender Brown shouted.

"Yeah, I saw her writing in her diary before we left," Pavarti Patil said.

"The international rules of dueling stipulate that a duelist has five minutes to arrive for a challenge," Snape said.

When the five minutes ran out, Snape said, "Very well, Mr. Zabini. Please step off the platform, your challenge has not been met."

Blaise just shrugged indifferently and stepped down.

"The next challenge is between Harry Potter and George Weasley," Snape said loudly.

Harry strode forward and stood up on the dueling platform.

"Where is Mr. Weasley?" Snape asked.

"Lee Jordan went to get him," a voice shouted.

"Well, tell Mr. Weasley that he has five minute till the duel is forfeit," Snape barked.

The boy just nodded and ran off, probably to tell George.

Harry waited on the platform, hoping that the stupid Weasley would get back on time. With just twenty seconds left before the five minutes were up, a determined looking George Weasley ran into the Great Hall as all the Gryffindors, Ravenclaws, and Hufflepuffs cheered. The Slytherins cheered as well, but that was because they wanted to see another Slytherin send another Gryffindor to the Hospital Wing.

George quickly climbed on the stage. "Potter, I've got something special for you," George spat.

"I look forward to it, Weasley," Harry said sarcastically.

"Boys, bow," Flitwick instructed.

Harry and George complied and took their dueling stance. A moment later, Flitwick sent sparks into the air.

"Serpensortia!" George bellowed causing a viper to launch out of his wand.

Everyone in the crowd shouted in shock as the viper began to race right at Harry. "I thought all Slytherins liked snakes, Potter!" George shouted with a huge grin.

To everyone's shock though, Harry just started to laugh before saying, "Engorgio Transfigo Serpensortia Boa Constrictor!"

A purple spell shot out of Harry's wand and struck the viper. A moment later, a sixteen foot Boa Constrictor replaced George's viper. The entire crowd was now beyond terrified as the massive snake

replaced the small viper. "Well, Weasley, you see we Slytherins like our Snakes a little bigger than you Gryffindors do," Harry said.

"Attack Potter!" George yelled, hoping he still controlled the now massive snake.

Harry just smirked as his Boa made no aggressive movement. "Attack Weasley," Harry commanded. A half a second later, the crowd gasped and screamed as Harry's Boa raced off to attack Weasley. Harry would learn later that it wasn't the snake going after George that made most of the people scream.

Weasley, for his part, was completely pale. He numbly sent a Stunning spell at the large snake, only to have it miss badly. A second later, the large Boa began to wrap itself around Weasley, who in his panic had completely forgotten about magic and was ferociously trying to hit the snake with his bare hands.

"Mr. Potter, you have won the duel! Stop your snake this instant!" McGonagall said as she and Dumbledore strode into the Great Hall.

"He still has his wand, ma'am, so technically the duel isn't over, but it will be shortly," Harry said maliciously.

"No! I surrender! Please call off the snake!" George screamed as the boa started to tighten its grip.

A moment later, McGonagall flicked her wand and vanished the large Boa.

Harry turned and walked off the platform. However, when he got to Draco, Blaise, Tonks, and Ginny, he found three of them shaking their heads while Ginny just looked scared. Before he could say anything, though, Draco and Blaise grabbed him and pushed their way out of the Great Hall.

"What?" Harry said exasperatedly as Draco pushed him into an empty classroom. Blaise, Tonks, and Ginny entered a second later.

"What he says," Blaise said shaking his head.

Tonks performed some Silencing and Locking charms on the door before saying, "Harry, why did you use Parseltongue?! That was stupid!"

"What? I didn't use Parseltongue...did I?" Harry asked weakly.

"Yeah, mate, looks like your secret's out," Blaise said.

"You mean, all of your knew," Ginny said in shock.

"Ginny, calm down. Blaise has known since first year, and Tonks and Draco before that," Harry said.

"B...but that's the mark of an evil wizard," Ginny said fearfully.

"Ginny, don't be stupid. Parseltongue is just a talent like everything else. A few Dark Wizards, especially You Know Who, gave it a bad name, though," Tonks said sharply.

"Oh," Ginny said, successfully chastised.

"This is just great. I didn't even realize I was using it," Harry said.

"You said something right before your snake attacked Weasley," Draco said.

"Oh, damn. I was directing it to attack Weasley. That was stupid of me," Harry said.

"Harry, this is really bad. I mean, enough people think you're behind all the petrifications, already," Blaise said.

"Y-you're not, right?" Ginny asked hesitantly.

"What's that supposed to mean, Ginny? You think I'm behind all this now because I'm a bloody Parselmouth? Figures you'd be just like your brother. When Ron found out, he wanted to scream that I was a Dark Wizard, even after I saved his life," Harry barked.

Ginny's face flushed with embarrassment before it shifted to pure shock. "Wait, Ron knows? Why didn't he tell anyone? I mean, he hates you," Ginny said.

"I saved him, Longbottom, and Granger from a mountain troll during my first year. I made the mistake of talking to Salazar afterwards and he found out I could speak to snakes; along with Dumbledore, McGonagall, Snape, and Blaise. To make sure I kept your brother's mouth shut, I called in a life debt," Harry said.

"You called in a life debt. That's really ancient magic. If Ron had said anything he would have been killed," Ginny said in shock.

"It was the only way to protect my secret, and now it looks like it's all for nothing," Harry said in annoyance.

"Well, it was your own fault. You should have just vanished the snake Weasley summoned and proceeded to curse him to hell. But no, you had to show how much better you were and transfigure the bloody thing into a Boa Constrictor," Tonks said angrily.

"Alright, I made a mistake!" Harry barked.

"Yeah, a big one," Draco said.

"Huge," Tonks agreed.

"And it will only get worse," Blaise said.

"What do you mean?" Ginny asked.

"Well, since Harry here is Mr. Popular with the press; what happens if someone leaks it to the Prophet that he's a Parselmouth? Combined with his appearance at the sites of two petrifications, they could paint him as an up and coming Dark Wizard," Blaise said.

"Oh bloody Hell!" Harry cursed.

A/N Well this is probably going to be my last update until after the New Year. I will be posting a revised chapter 1 & 2 as soon as I get chapter 2 back from my beta. Also I'm not sure if any of you noticed it,

but the story rating has moved from Teen to Mature. I did this because of content that I have planned for future chapters Happy Holidays everybody!

## Chapter 22

### Christmas Changes

The next few days passed exactly as Blaise had predicted. The day after the dueling club the Daily Prophet found out that Harry was a Parselmouth from an unnamed source. The paper proceeded to have a field day with that bit of information. They accused Harry of being the next Dark Lord while praising Albus Dumbledore for keeping a close eye on him.

Harry wasn't sure what upset him more, the fact that he was getting at least ten Howlers a morning from people screaming at him to stay away from their children, or that everyone had fallen in love with the idea of Dumbledore being his Magical Guardian now. It seemed that in the eyes of the Wizarding World, Albus Dumbledore was the only one who could stop Harry from turning into the next Voldemort.

The one bit of good news was that the paper hadn't started accusing him of opening the Chamber of Secrets. Dumbledore must have used every trick he knew to keep the story

quiet because so far no mention of it had shown up in the prophet.

Unfortunately for Harry, using Parseltongue wasn't the only thing he regretted about his duel with George Weasley. After McGonagall saw him use such advanced Transfiguration, she called him into her office after their next class.

::Flashback::

Harry stepped into Professor McGonagall's office after yet another boring transfiguration lesson on Switching Spells. Harry had gained Slytherin 60 points for demonstrating his knowledge about the spells. Of course, he also couldn't help but to show off and shocked the class by switching Ron Weasley's ears with cactus needles. This had actually cost Harry 30 of the 60 points he earned, but every Slytherin thought it was worth it.

"Mr. Potter, take a seat," McGonagall said sharply.

Harry sat down across from the stern head of Gryffindor and decided to just beat her to the punch. "I'm sorry I switched Weasley's ears with cactus needles, Professor," Harry said simply.

"First of all, Mr. Potter, you are not sorry, so don't even bother trying to lie to me. Secondly, I didn't call you in here to discuss your questionable use of the Switching Spell," McGonagall said.

"Then why am I here? Are you going to lecture me about how I'm an evil Parselmouth? Because I'm not really in the mood for that," Harry said.

"Mr. Potter, I have known about your ability as a Parselmouth since last Halloween. Why on earth would I lecture you about it now?" McGonagall asked sternly.

"I have no idea," Harry said blankly. "So if you aren't upset about my little prank on Weasley, and you don't care about my Parseltongue, then why am I here?"

"I wanted to talk about the spell you used on Mr. Weasley..." McGonagall started.

"It was a Switching Spell," Harry replied dismissively.

"Not the spell on Mr. Ron Weasley, but the one you used on Mr. George Weasley!" the Transfiguration Professor said fiercely, her eyes bright. "Where did you learn how to do Same Species Transfiguration? I happen to know that is an advanced, OWL-level spell, which is quite difficult, even if a snake is probably among the simplest animals to perform it on," McGonagall finished.

Harry looked his estranged professor in the eyes for a moment trying to figure out what he was going to tell her. Deciding that he needed help, he lowered his head into his robes and said, 'Sssalazar, I need you, would you mind coming out?'

A moment later, Salazar unwrapped himself from Harry's chest and climbed out of his robes. 'What do you need masster? Are you sssure it isss wissse to ssspeak in front of the witch-cat?'

'Yesss, it isss fine, ssshe knowsss I am a Parssselmouth, ass doesss the ressst of the ssschool now. Ssso we may converssse whenever we would like,' Harry replied.

'Good, I wasss ssso sssick of you not anssswering me when thossse who did not know of your ability were around,' Salazar said.

'I guesss sssome good did come of everyone finding out. Now, McGonagall wantsss to know where I learned the advanced transssfiguration I ussed in my duel, what ssshould I tell her?' Harry asked.

'You can not tell her the truth?' Salazar asked.

'No, I can't tell her it isss from The Big Book of Transssfiguration. Ssshe would confissscate it,' Harry hissed in annoyance.

'Then sssimply tell her that you read it in another book,' Salazar hissed like it was the most obvious thing in the world.

'But what book?' Harry asked.

'What doesss it matter?' Salazar asked.

'Becaussse ssshe will mossst likely know if I am lying. Ssshe hasss read many of the textsss on Transssfiguration,' Harry hissed.

'Then tell her I knew of the ssspell and told you,' Salazar said.

'What! Ssshe would never believe that. Besidesss, you don't know any magic,' Harry replied.

'But ssshe doesss not know thisss. Ssshe could not prove you wrong,' Salazar replied.

&&&

Minerva McGonagall was speechless as she watched Harry start to hiss back and forth with his familiar. A part of her wanted to know what was so damn important that he would start to speak with his snake after she asked him a question; however, a larger part was terrified that the snake was actually underneath Harry's clothes during class. Ever since she first laid eyes on Harry's familiar, she was unsettled by it.

The thing that really unnerved Minerva though was how much the snake had grown in the short time that Harry had been at Hogwarts. While the snake was once less than two feet, it was now easily past three feet while gaining a solid inch in girth. Most of the staff was wary of the creature although very few had actually seen it. Even Severus said that he had only seen the serpent two or three times when it was not around Mr. Potter's shoulders in the Slytherin common room.

Dumbledore had said that he believed the rumor that Salazar was around Harry's chest in class, but most the staff hadn't believed it to be possible. The snake was rather large after all and couldn't be concealed that easily; however, after seeing the creature slither out of Mr. Potter's robes, Minerva was starting to think Albus was right.

As Minerva tried to think of a reason why Harry would need his familiar around him during class, Harry finally answered her question.

"Salazar taught me the spell."

It took a full five second count for Minerva to process that. His snake. He expects me to believe that his snake knows magic. Why, that's just preposterous, I mean snakes can't...I'm sure that...no, it's not possible!

"Mr. Potter, do you really expect me to believe that your snake taught you a spell?" McGonagall said with disbelief.

"Yes, ma'am. Salazar knows some rather powerful magic; however, he refuses to teach me anything that he believes I can't handle," Harry said simply.

“Mr. Potter, your familiar is not responsible for this, so just tell me the real place where you learned that spell. Did a fifth or sixth year let you borrow their Transfiguration book? I know Mr. Derik is in my 6th year NEWT class,” McGonagall said.

“Sorry, ma’am, but Salazar did teach me the spell,” Harry said with an overly earnest grin.

:: End Flashback:

McGonagall had not spoken to Harry since their discussion. Harry assumed that being told a snake taught a wizard magic was an insult to her intelligence.

Harry wasn’t the only person who was suffering because of the Daily Prophet articles, though. Ginny and Tonks both had received letters from their families suggesting that they distance themselves from Harry.

After Tonks got her letter from her mum, she just wrote a brief reply, asked to borrow Andi, and sent her to her mum. Three day’s later, Tonks received arguably the loudest Howler in the history of Hogwarts. Andromeda’s booming voice screamed that she would be grounded the moment she got off the train and for the first month of summer vacation. When the Howler finished, Tonks just wiped the ash from the burned letter off the table, and acted like she hadn’t heard a thing. She also refused to tell anyone what she had said in her reply to her mother.

Ginny was actually more enraged then Tonks by her family’s warning about Harry. The reason for it was that the letter was actually from her father, who had finally decided to write her.

: Flashback:

A rather pathetic and old looking barn owl had just crashed at the Slytherin table.

"What the hell! Is that bird alive?" Draco asked disgusted with the shabby looking creature.

"Yes, that's Errol, my family's owl. I really have no idea how old he is," Ginny said as she happily untied a letter from the now unconscious owl's leg.

"Can we push it off the table? I mean, it might have a disease," Draco said, wrinkling his nose.

"I guess, but where would we put him?" Ginny asked.

"Trash can?" Draco asked.

"No," Ginny snapped.

"Andi!" Harry called.

"Yes, Master Harry, sir?" Andi asked, popping up next to him.

"Take this owl somewhere until it's well enough to fly," Harry ordered.

"Yes, Master Harry," Andi said as she scooped up the unconscious owl and disappeared with another pop.

"Thanks," Ginny said as she opened her letter and started to read it. When she was about half way done with the letter, she tossed it on the table in disgust.

"What's wrong?" Draco asked.

"What's wrong? What's wrong! Listen to this!" Ginny yelled causing several nearby Slytherins to stop and listen to her.

Dear Ginny,

I'm sorry I haven't had the opportunity to write you, but work has become very stressful.

"First off, that's a load of bollocks. He's had the time to write all my worthless Gryffindor brothers," Ginny barked.

I can't say I wasn't a little surprised when Ron informed me that you were placed in Slytherin. I was even further astonished when Percy informed me that you were close to Lucius' son. I want to warn you to watch out. You're from a good family and Slytherins will use anything they can against you.

"It's like he's completely forgotten that I'M ALSO A SLYTHERIN! How could he just blatantly insult my house, it's like he's in denial!" Ginny shrieked in annoyance.

Finally, I read the Daily Prophet a few days ago and was shocked to find out that your friend Harry Potter was a Parselmouth. Ginny, you need to be careful, that is the mark of a Dark Wizard. I know you were pen pals with Harry over the summer, but don't be afraid to distance yourself from him. If he won't leave you alone, speak to Professor Dumbledore about it.

Love Dad

"Who the bloody hell does he think he is?! Incendio!" A single enraged word from Ginny set fire to the letter.

After Ginny had calmed down, she got up and walked right up to Professor Snape at the head table, who had watched the entire spectacle along with most the staff.

"Ms. Weasley, is there something I can do for you?" Snape asked evenly.

"Yes, I want to be put on the list of students staying here over the break," Ginny demanded.

"Very well, Ms. Weasley. I shall see that your name is added," Snape said.

:: End Flashback:

Ginny spent the last few days before the Christmas break in a foul mood. She quickly found out that she was going to be the only Slytherin who was remaining at Hogwarts. Harry, Tonks, Draco, and Blaise felt very bad for her, especially when her brothers and parents found out she wouldn't be returning home.

Ginny received a Howler from her mother demanding that she take her name off the staying at Hogwarts list, she was pranked ruthlessly by the twins, Percy berated her for turning her back on her family after her History of Magic class, and Ron simply referred to her as 'Slytherin' whenever he saw her. After all that, or perhaps because of it, Ginny continued to refuse to go home with her brothers.

December 18th, Hogwarts Great Hall

Harry, Draco, Tonks, Blaise, and Ginny sat together at breakfast. The Hogwarts Express would be leaving in an hour and a half to return everyone home for the holidays. However, only Harry, Draco, and Blaise were looking forward to the holiday.

Harry had accepted an invitation to Malfoy Manor and would be spending the holiday with Draco, Lucius, and Narcissa. Harry was looking forward to the trip. At the very least, the unplotable ward at Malfoy Manor would give Harry a break from the constant Howlers and jinxed letters.

Tonks and Ginny, though, were practically depressed at the thought of the holidays.

"Don't look so glum, Tonks, I'll send Andi every day," Harry said.

"Yeah, and if Andi is busy, Ginny, we'll just send Trixi or Dobby with a letter to you," Draco said.

"Thanks," Tonks and Ginny said together.

"You know, Tonks, if you really don't want to go home, why don't you just take your name off the list?" Draco said.

"McGonagall wouldn't let me," Tonks said exasperatedly.

While Draco was trying to cheer Tonks up, Harry was doing his best to get Ginny to smile. "At least you won't have to deal with Slytherin's monster over the break," Harry said with a grin.

"Oh, how do you know that?" Ginny said.

"Well, let's see, since you and a few other first years are the only people staying here over the break, I think it will be pretty safe," Harry said.

"Or maybe it's because you won't be here, Potter."

Harry, Draco, Ginny, Tonks, and Blaise all looked up to see Ron Weasley glaring at them.

"Go away," Ginny spat.

"I'm here to offer you one last chance to come home," Ron said just as menacingly.

"Leave," Ginny said flatly.

"Fine then, don't expect any presents from me!" Ron said loudly before storming out of the Great Hall.

"I can't believe I'm related to—to—to that," Ginny said angrily.

"Me either," Draco, Harry, Tonks, and Blaise said together.

"So Ginny, what do you plan on doing over the break?" Blaise asked.

"I don't kn..." Ginny started.

"Mr. Potter, the headmaster wishes to speak with you."

Harry turned around and groaned at the sight of his Head of House.

"Today, Mr. Potter!" Snape sneered.

Harry quickly nodded his head, got up, and followed Snape to the headmaster's office.

"Cockroach Cluster," Snape said as Harry rolled his eyes at the password.

The gargoyle jumped out of the way and Harry followed Snape up the spiral staircase. When they approached the door, Harry heard Dumbledore say, "Enter." Again, Harry wondered how the headmaster knew when they were outside.

Snape opened the door, and Harry followed him inside. The room hadn't changed at all. Dumbledore's phoenix was again sitting on a perch next to him while several objects around the room were spinning or making some odd noises.

"Ah, thank you, Severus. That is all," Dumbledore said.

Snape just nodded and quickly left the room.

"Harry, please take a seat. Would you like a lemon drop?" Dumbledore asked, extending a box of candy towards Harry.

"No, thank you, sir," Harry replied coolly.

"Very well. I suppose you want to know why I asked you here," Dumbledore said.

"Yes," Harry replied, trying not to roll his eyes at the headmaster for blatantly stating the obvious.

"I would like for you to remain at Hogwarts this Christmas," Dumbledore said bluntly.

"WHAT!" Harry said in shock.

"Now Harry, please hear me out," Dumbledore said soothingly.

Is the man mad? What in Merlin's name would compel me to stay here?! "Absolutely not. I will be going with Draco to his house for the break," Harry said.

Dumbledore sighed. "Harry, I do not wish to force your hand on this issue, but since you are not visiting your aunt and uncle, I am asking you as your guardian to remain."

"So you are absent from my life for twelve years, and now you decide to just ruin my Christmas!" Harry raged.

"Harry, I'd like us to spend this Christmas getting to know each other," Dumbledore said.

Harry was about to tell the headmaster just what he thought about him when Dumbledore raised his hand and said, "I should have known that remaining absent from your life would cause you to see me as an authority figure, and me to see you as another member of the student body. In hindsight, I should have tried to reach out to you earlier. I could have kept magic a secret until you were ready, and I'm sorry. I will not make the same mistake again though, Harry. So I'm sorry if you feel I'm ruining your Christmas, but I would like to get to know you better, and I can not do that during the normal school year. Christmas break will give us at least enough time to get to know each other."

Harry for his part wasn't sure what to think. It looked like Dumbledore was going to make him stay either way, so his current Christmas plans were scrapped. Harry's mind was racing a mile a minute trying to think of what to do or say. A large part of him wanted to scream at the headmaster, trash his office, and then leave on the train with Draco. Another part, though, wanted to get to know the headmaster. So far, Harry had been completely unsuccessful in trying to find out what Dumbledore did or didn't know about their connection. Asking Dumbledore about his family might be a way to find out; however, that presented another problem. If Dumbledore did know about being Harry's great-great grandfather, and Harry asked about his family to much, Dumbledore might realize that Harry was on to him. Merlin, what do I do??? Harry screamed mentally.

'Massster, I sssenssse you are dissstressssed,' Salazar hissed as he stuck his head out of Harry's robes.

Harry ignored the headmaster's arched eyebrow and answered his familiar. 'I don't know what to do. Dumbledore iss forcing me to ssstay at the cassstle thiss break insstead of going to the Malfoysss,' Harry replied.

'Why?' Salazar asked curiously.

'He claimsss he wissshesss to get to know me. I would rather go with Draco, but he appearsss to not be giving me a choice. I am unsssure about what to do. You know of my relationssship with Dumbledore, but I am unsssure if he iss aware of being my great-great grandfather. A part of me wantsss to try to find out information about hisss grand-daughter; however, if he knowsss about me being his grandson, he will get sssussspiciousss about asking about her,' Harry said.

'Yess, it iss a dangerousss sssituation, but not one you have control off. Are you certain he will not allow you too leave?' Salazar asked.

'Yesss, he wantsss to get to know me,' Harry said with annoyance.

'Then there iss nothing you can do but be careful around him,' Salazar hissed.

Harry despondently nodded his head before shifting his focus to Dumbledore.

Harry was about to speak when Dumbledore said, "I must say that is a wonderful ability. Parseltongue, I mean. To actually be able to speak with one's familiar must be a rewarding experience. Fawkes is able to understand me, and he is able to express his agreement or disagreement through his thrills, but it's not the same."

"Err, thanks. Most would disagree with you, though," Harry said pointedly.

"Yes, sadly, the Wizarding world can be rather narrow-minded," Dumbledore said softly.

"Sir, can I leave? I will need to tell Draco I'm being detained here over the holidays," Harry said shortly.

"I really wish you wouldn't look at it like that, Harry. I really do just wish to get to know you a little better; however, I agree that you should inform Mr. Malfoy," Dumbledore said.

Harry quickly stood up, left Dumbledore's office, and walked to the Great Hall. He found his friends still sitting at the table.

"Hey, Harry! What did Dumbledore want?" Tonks asked as Harry sat down.

"Oh, he just ruined my holiday," Harry replied shortly.

"What are you talking about?" Ginny asked.

"The headmaster has informed me that since I'm not planning on returning to my relatives, I am to remain at Hogwarts so that we can get to know each other. Apparently, he's sorry for not giving a damn about me for the first twelve years of my life," Harry said sarcastically.

"What! But what about our plans?" Draco whined.

"I know, Draco, I'm sorry," Harry said.

"Don't be. When father finds out..." Draco said muttering under his breath.

"So you're staying?" Ginny said.

Harry picked up the slightest bit of happiness in Ginny's question. It didn't bother him, though. He figured Ginny might be a little bit happy about not being alone on Christmas, especially since she was estranged from her family.

"Yeah Ginny, it looks like it's just you and me," Harry said.

"Wish I could stay," Tonks muttered.

"What's that, Tonks?" Harry asked.

"I just said I wish I could stay, now. The only reason I agreed to come home is because I didn't want to be alone at Hogwarts. Now both you and Ginny are going to be staying here," Tonks said dejectedly.

"Can't you stay? Surely it can't be too late to take your name off the list if Dumbledore just told me I had to stay," Harry said.

"D-do you think McGonagall would let me stay?" Tonks asked.

"If you really don't want to go home, you should just ask her," Blaise said.

"And if she gives you any problems, tell her about what Dumbledore just did," Harry put forth.

"Okay, I'll go right now," Tonks said as she got up and walked over to where McGonagall was sitting at the staff table.

&&&

Minerva McGonagall was not having a good week. Not only had Mr. Potter fed her some cock and bull story about his snake teaching him magic, which she had no way of disproving, but now she had to listen to Filius praise how advanced Harry had become in the art of Animation. She had to admit she was both stunned and incredibly impressed when Filius not only informed her that he had taught Harry how to do animate while transfiguring an object, but also that Mr. Potter was able to do it on his first attempt. Regardless of his gift in Transfiguration, unless he had a book to properly explain the theory, Harry shouldn't have been able to do such advanced work.

Minerva suspected that Harry possessed at least one advanced tome on Transfiguration, and that he had charmed the cover to look like his second year Transfiguration book. He pretty much told her as much when he refused to show her his Transfiguration book after class.

While Minerva was fine with Harry reading advanced books, she was not okay with him reading just any book on advanced Transfiguration, as some spells were rather dangerous.

Another thing that bothered her was the incredible ease with which Harry had transfigured the snake during his duel with George Weasley. She knew Harry was capable of transfiguring a snake into an inanimate object, but to turn it into another larger snake under his control was not something she ever taught him.

The spell that he used, though, was what worried Minerva most of all. Engorgio Transfigo Serpensortia was a spell used solely for dueling, and Minerva knew of only a few books which contained it. After her duties with the dueling club were over, she had immediately gone to Ira and asked if any of the books were checked out or missing from the school library. All of the books, though, were in fact still in the restricted section.

This led to yet another set of rather frightening possibilities. Either Harry had figured out a way to sneak into the restricted section, or he had a copy of one of the books. A part of her wanted to believe that Harry had gotten into the restricted section, after all, his father had been able to do it. However, the fact that Ira said the books hadn't left the section in weeks made her believe that he had his own copy. The boy was just too fascinated with his text book all year for it not to have been something else.

"Ummm...Professor McGonagall?"

Minerva looked up and saw young Nymphadora Tonks standing in front of her and Filius. "Yes, Ms. Tonks? What can I do for you?" she asked.

"I...um...was wondering if you could take my name off the list of people who will be going home," Tonks said.

"I'm sorry, dear, but that list was made final over a week ago," McGonagall said.

"That didn't stop the headmaster from just now telling Harry he couldn't go home with Draco," Tonks said sharply.

Minerva was taken aback by Ms. Tonks' suddenly angry tone; however, any reprimand she would have given was quickly thrown out the window when Filius spoke up. "What do you mean, Ms. Tonks?" he asked.

"The headmaster just called Harry into his office and told him he wasn't allowed to go to Draco's for Christmas. If Harry is being forced to stay at school, I want to stay also," Tonks said.

"I'm sorry, dear, but the list was made final..." McGonagall started once more.

"That's not fair! The only reason I even signed that stupid list was because I didn't want to be alone at Hogwarts over the holidays. Now Harry and Ginny are both staying and I'm being forced to go!" Tonks exclaimed in annoyance.

"Minerva, perhaps we could allow for an exception this year. If what Ms. Tonks said is true, then the headmaster will not mind," Filius said.

Tonks shot her Charms Professor a smile before turning to her Head of House. "Please, ma'am, it's Christmas," Tonks begged.

"And what will your mother think when she goes to pick you up and you aren't at the station?" McGonagall asked.

"I can get Harry to send his elf with a note. That way she won't go to the station unnecessarily," Tonks said.

"What about your mother, though? Surely you would want to see her over Christmas?" McGonagall said.

Tonks snorted, "The same woman who told me I should distance myself from my first true friends and threatened to send me to Beauxbatons this summer? No, thank you, I'd rather just stay at the castle," Tonks said.

Both Minerva and Filius shot each other stunned looks. "Surely you jest, dear. Andromeda actually threatened to send you Beauxbatons?" McGonagall said in disbelief.

"I'm not kidding, ma'am, but the story is rather long and I'll have to tell it too you another time. Can I stay?" Tonks asked again.

"Very well, but I expect you to send that note to your mother right away," McGonagall said as Tonks smiled and raced back to the Slytherin table with a huge grin on her face.

"She said yes!" Tonks exclaimed happily as soon as she sat down.

"That's great, Tonks!" Harry said with a smile.

"Yeah, I just need to send my mum a note with your house elf not to pick me up at the station," Tonks explained.

"That's great! Andi," Harry called out.

There was a quick pop as the little elf appeared. "Yes, Master Harry, sir," Andi said.

"Tonks, do you have that note?" Harry asked.

"Err, no, I have to go write it," Tonks admitted.

"Andi, go with Tonks and then bring her note to her mum, okay?" Harry said.

"Yes, Master Harry," Andi said as she followed Tonks out of the Great Hall.

&&&

The weeks leading up to Christmas were among the most eventful of Harry's year. Harry had grown to despise the little chats he had with Dumbledore. No matter what Harry tried, Dumbledore was always able to shift the focus off his past and onto Harry's. When Harry refused to answer what he liked to do over the summer or what his

favorite muggle sweet was, Dumbledore seemed to accept that Harry refused to talk about his past. Since then, their conversations had been solely about Harry's Charms and Transfiguration work, much to their mutual disappointment.

After Mrs. Tonks received Tonks' note about staying at Hogwarts, she sent Andi back to Tonks with a Howler as a reply. The note exploded as soon as Andi delivered it, but Tonks stood her ground and send a reply with Andi that she would not be coming home.

After Andi returned, she told them that Andromeda was very angry. That turned out to be the understatement of the century. Andromeda apparated to Hogsmeade, and then walked up to the castle to retrieve Tonks the following day. It was only through the intervention of Professor McGonagall and the headmaster that Mrs. Tonks and Tonks didn't start throwing hexes at each other. When the situation diffused a little, Andromeda told the headmaster that she would be taking Tonks home.

That, however, proved impossible when Dumbledore explained that during the 13th century the Wizarding world was facing a powerful Dark Lord, and many families were being torn apart between those who followed him and those who didn't. The headmaster of Hogwarts at that time decided to adjust the wards to protect young students from being placed into such an adverse environment during vacations when students could remain at the castle. The headmaster's plan was to give the power to the students, not the parents, to decide if they wanted to remain at the castle. The list that the students signed to stay at school was directly tied into the school's powerful wards, and any attempt by a parent to force a student to leave would cause the castle wards to react against a threat.

Andromeda was not happy about that at all; however, she did not want to be attacked by the wards of Hogwarts. Eventually, Andromeda left the castle after telling Tonks that she was going to be grounded for most of the summer.

Tonks wasn't the only person having trouble with her family. The day after Mrs. Tonks left, Ginny got an owl from her brother Charlie in

Romania. Ginny practically burst into tears after she read it, and Tonks had to read it for her when Harry asked what it said.

Charlie had torn into Ginny for “choosing friends over family”, “acting like a spoiled little girl” and “making their mother cry”. It took a good ten minutes for Harry and Tonks to console Ginny before she stopped crying. When Ginny finally asked why he would say some of the things he did, neither Harry nor Tonks had any good answers for her. Tonks eventually just suggested writing her side of the story to Charlie since he didn't know everything.

Ginny eventually decided that was the best course of action and wrote a massive letter to Charlie describing the twins' and Ron's attitude toward her. How Mr. Weasley hadn't even bothered to write her because she was a Slytherin, and how when he did, he demanded that she separate herself from one of her best friends. Ginny also did her best to convince Charlie that Harry's Parseltongue didn't make him evil, and that it was just a gift like Beastspeaking, a talent Charlie had always envied.

Outside of family problems though, Harry, Ginny, and Tonks were having a good break. Harry and Ginny had shown Tonks where the Slytherin common room was and gave her the password during Christmas break. Since Harry and Ginny were the only two Slytherins who decided to remain at Hogwarts, Tonks moved her things into the first year Slytherin dormitory the next day.

Harry started teaching Ginny Occlumency with Tonks' and Salazar's help. Surprisingly, Ginny proved to be incredibly talented in the field of mind magic. Harry only needed to describe what she needed to do, and she would immediately implement it without a problem. Ginny seemed incredibly determined to catch up to Draco, Blaise, Tonks, and Harry, and began practicing obsessively.

While Ginny would practice her Occlumency, Harry took Tonks into his dormitory and showed her all his advance tomes. Harry also showed her his list of advanced Transfiguration and Charms spells that he wanted to learn. When Tonks read over the list, she found one spell that made her eyes widen in shock.

::Flashback::

"Harry," Tonks said.

"Yeah Tonks, what is it?" Harry asked as he set down Defensive Transfiguration.

"When were you going to tell me you were working on becoming an Animagus?" Tonks asked sternly.

Harry suddenly felt very guilty. "Tonks, I...err... well, you know, when I took my blood purity test, it said I had the ability to become an Animagus. I should have told you that I was planning on doing it," he said.

"How long have you been working on it?" Tonks asked curiously.

"Um, well, since summer, I guess. The Big Book of Transfiguration had a huge section on it," Harry said.

"So, how far are you? What's your form?" Tonks asked, now very interested.

"I need the potion. I wrote Lucius about it in October and he said he'd do his best to get it for me, but since it's a controlled substance it would be difficult," Harry admitted.

"How long do you think it will take you to transform once you know what you are?" Tonks asked eagerly.

"I don't know," Harry admitted.

"What do you know about it?" Tonks asked.

"Here, read this," Harry said as he handed her The Big Book of Transfiguration.

Basic principles of the Animagus Transformation(for advanced theory please see pp. 227-356).

Though one of the more common types of powers unique to wizards, Animagi are nevertheless uncommon because the talent, while possessing an inborn component, also requires a number of magical effects to be utilized in order for the natural abilities to fully come out. Unlike similar abilities (see Metamorphmagi, p. 357 and Blood Shifters, p. 428), which manifest themselves after the fifth or sixth birthday, most people with the Animagus talent never actually become Animagi. The rituals required for bringing out the talent presuppose extensive knowledge of Transfiguration and Charms. Most potential Animagi do not possess the necessary ability in one or more of the arts necessary to become an Animagus.

A second deterrent is that many people do not possess the necessary discipline to tame the transforming power. In order to switch into one's Animagus form, it is necessary for the wizard to embrace the change, to want to allow the creature into his heart, mind, and soul. A wizard who makes his first change is never the same afterwards. Many of the animals' traits carry over into human form. Sometimes, those traits can be simple, like a craving for certain kinds of foods. Other times, it can be far more significant. One ancient sorceress had been a noted scarlet woman before she discovered her Unicorn Animagus form. After her initial transformation she swore off all carnal activity until her death more than two and a half centuries later.

Another deterrent is that the prospective Animagus cannot choose their form, and until recently one had to do extensive meditation to find it. The Animagus Revelius potion will allow for someone with the ability to become an Animagus to find their form by entering a hallucinogenic state; however, if someone lacks the ability to become an Animagus, the potion creates a three hour long nightmare.

No one is sure how the animal form for any person is chosen. Some specialists have theorized that an individual's personality is a primary factor and others have differing theories. No one truly knows. Virtually every animal across the globe has been documented as Animagus form in someone, from cats and dogs to earthworms and crickets. Some magical animals have been known to appear as potential forms, such as hellhounds, or unicorns.

"Wow," Tonks said in astonishment.

"I know," Harry said, taking the book from her.

:: End Flashback:

Christmas Morning, Hogwarts

"HARRY, WAKE UP!"

Harry opened his eyes just in time to see Tonks and Ginny point their wands at him and shout, "Aguamenti!" Two jets of freezing cold water shot out of both of their wands and struck him in the face. The moment the water hit him, he quickly woke up and rolled out of bed.

"What the bloody hell was that for!" Harry bellowed.

"Can't be mad at us, it's Christmas!" Tonks said with a grin. "Now that you've had your shower, get downstairs so we can open presents."

"I swear I'm going to get you for this, and where are all my presents?" Harry asked, looking around the empty room.

"Andi moved them downstairs, now let's go, come on!" Ginny said impatiently.

"Fine, fine, fine. Can you two at least leave the room while I change out of these robes?" Harry said.

"Aww, is Hawwwy too embarrassed to take his shirt off with two girls in the room?" Tonks said, causing Harry to blush.

"OUT!" Harry yelled as he sent some low level jinxes at Tonks and Ginny.

"You're not supposed to hex on Christmas, Scrooge," Tonks said playfully as she fled the room.

Harry quickly changed, took out Ginny's and Tonks' Christmas gifts from his trunk, and walked downstairs.

"Finally!" Tonks said as soon as she saw him.

"Tonks, it's five in the morning!" Harry yawned.

"Don't complain, Harry, she woke me up at three, and she claims she was up at one," Ginny said.

"You have to be kidding me," Harry said in shock.

"Nope, I love Christmas; I always wake up early Christmas morning, I can't help it," Tonks said excitedly.

"What did you do for four hours by yourself?" Harry asked curiously.

"Oh, well...um, I made a list trying to guess what my presents were. That took about thirty minutes. I was going to wake Ginny up, but I decided that it'd be more fun to wake you up. I ran into Andi as she was levitating your presents onto your trunk, and she convinced me to hold off waking you up and to have some food. We ate and talked till two forty five when I decided to wake Ginny up. She took my form of wake up way worse than you, and we got into a duel," Tonks admitted.

"Which I won," Ginny said smugly.

"You did not!" Tonks said.

"Yes, I did. I tired you out and you fell back asleep," Ginny said proudly.

"Only for an hour. Anyway, when I woke up again at four, Ginny was still up, and we decided that we'd wake you up. Um, well, that is, we tried to wake you up. Andi was camped outside of your room and refused to let us in until we agreed to move your presents to the common room so that they didn't get damaged. And now here we are so let's open our presents!" Tonks said excitedly.

Harry laughed at Tonks' enthusiasm. "Fine, fine. How do you want to open them?" Harry asked.

"Well, let's exchange our gifts first," Tonks said as she pushed a gift each to Harry and Ginny.

Harry and Ginny followed suit and handed over their gifts to each other. As soon as Tonks got her gifts, she frantically began tearing the paper apart as fast as she could. "A subscription to Teen Witch Weekly! Thanks Ginny, I love it!" Tonks said happily.

"No problem. Thanks for the body and hair potions," Ginny said with a smile.

"Harry, why aren't you opening your gifts?" Tonks asked.

Harry immediately grabbed the nearest gift, opened it, and found a small knitted green and silver beanie.

"Oh, that's from me. Do you like it?" Ginny asked hesitantly.

"Yeah, its great, Ginny, thanks," Harry said as he put it on.

"I...um made it myself," Ginny said, blushing furiously.

"Really? That's amazing Ginny! I didn't know you could knit," Tonks said.

"Yeah, mum taught me ages ago. I'm not that good at it," Ginny admitted.

"Nah, you did a great job," Harry said, causing Ginny's blush to deepen. "So, are you two going to open my gifts or not?"

That seemed to snap Tonks out of her momentary loss of concentration and she began to attack Harry's present. When she finally opened it, she gasped. "Harry, you didn't!" she said.

"Well, I didn't have a lot of time to go shopping this year, so I actually got you both the same gift, I hope you don't mind," Harry said.

Tonks just shook her head in the negative and Ginny quickly opened Harry's gift to see what had Tonks so excited. Harry's gift was in a

small wrapped envelope, which was easy enough to open. When she opened the envelope, Ginny smiled when she saw the Gladrags gift certificate; however, when she read 100 Galleons she also gasped in shock. "Harry, I can't believe you did this!" Ginny said quickly.

"I put off doing my shopping this year after everything that happened, and I didn't know what to get. I was actually starting to panic last week, but I heard Daphne Greengrass talking to Parkinson about getting a Gladrags gift certificate. Parkinson said that she gets a 100 Galleon gift certificate every year because her dad knew not to pick anything out for her," Harry said.

"Oh Ginny, we have got to look through my Gladrags catalogue tonight!" Tonks said excitedly.

While Ginny and Tonks started to quickly talk about the outfits they might get with the gift certificate, Harry opened Tonks' present, which contained custom made Seeker's gloves. The gloves had Green and Silver trim with two serpents on top.

"Thanks Tonks, these are great," Harry said, holding up the gloves for both girls to see.

"Oh, I'm glad you like them. Now, I say we do a free for all for the rest of the presents," Tonks said greedily.

"Fine with me," Harry said, but Tonks was already opening her next gift with a grin on her face.

Harry began opening his remaining presents. He got a book called Animating the World from Professor Flitwick, some sweets from Susan and Hannah, and some quills that wouldn't misspell words from Blaise. Harry was looking for the gifts from the Malfoys when Andi popped into being next to him.

"Master Harry, sir, if you is looking for the gift from the Malfoys, I is needing to go and get it," Andi said.

"What do you mean?" Harry asked.

"When I is delivering your gift to the Malfoys, Mr. Malfoy gave me Mr. Harry Potter's gift, but said it was to be guarded because it is important," Andi said seriously.

Wondering what exactly Mr. Malfoy had gotten him, Harry told Andi to retrieve the present. Andi quickly nodded and popped away, a second later she was back with two wrapped packages.

Harry accepted the two packages and opened the first one. It turned out to be a book titled *Releasing the Animal Within* by William McKinnon. As soon as Harry opened the first page, he realized what the book described. Harry quickly shut the book, and carefully unwrapped the smaller package, which turned out to be a vial of jet black liquid.

"Harry, what's that?" Ginny asked, pointing to the black potion.

"This...this...is a gift from Mr. Malfoy," Harry said, still in shock.

"A potion? What does it do?" Tonks asked.

Harry just absentmindedly tossed the book *Releasing the Animal Within* towards Ginny and Tonks. Tonks only had to read the cover before she gasped. "He didn't!" she said.

Harry could only nod.

"I don't understand. What is that?" Ginny asked as she opened the book and began to read the first page. As soon as she finished the first paragraph, she also gasped.

"I can't believe he was able to get you the Animagus Potion," Tonks said in awe.

"You aren't going to drink that, are you! If you aren't an Animagus, the things you see are supposed to be terrifying!" Ginny exclaimed.

"I am an Animagus," Harry replied absentmindedly.

"How do you know?" Ginny asked in astonishment.

"Doesn't matter, I do," Harry said as he popped the cork off the potion.

"Harry, don't drink it now..." Tonks shouted as Harry quickly swallowed the potion.

"Why didn't you want me to drink it?" Harry asked as soon as every last drop was gone.

"Harry, have you lost your bloody mind! That potion is one of the most powerful hallucinogens in the Wizarding world! We have to be at breakfast in two hours with every Professor in the entire school!" Tonks screamed.

"Oh," Harry said as his vision began to swirl.

"Oh. Oh! All you can say is bloody OH?" Tonks shouted.

"No, I can also say gggghh," Harry said as he clutched his stomach. "I don't feel so good."

"Are you okay?" Ginny asked quickly rushing over to him.

"No," Harry said simply as his eyes rolled back into his head and he fell forward.

&&&

Harry opened his eyes, but it was too dark to see. Suddenly, there was a flicker of light from a torch, and then two, then three, soon hundreds of torches lit up the room where he was lying on his back. Harry slowly got to his knees and began looking around. The room was completely empty. Torches lined the stone walls, and they cast shadows all over the room. Harry quickly tried to shift into his shadow form to look around the room, but found that he could not.

He tentatively stood up and began walking around the vast empty space. He approached the nearest wall and slid his hand against it. While it was clearly made of stone, the surface was smooth and even.

"Harry," a soft voice called out.

"Harry!" a much sharper voice barked.

Harry quickly turned around and found himself staring at two figures with deep hoods to hide their faces.

"Who are you?" Harry demanded.

"We are the keepers," the first replied.

"You are here to seek your form," the second said.

"What is this place?" Harry asked.

"It is what it is. As it is supposed to be," the first said cryptically.

"That really didn't explain anything, you know," Harry said dryly. "How do I find my form?"

"The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step," the second said.

"Wow, you've read a fortune cookie," Harry said dryly.

"You need to find your form," the first said again.

"A journey you must take," the second said.

"A journey where?" Harry asked. At last it was getting to the damn point.

The first cloaked figure waved its hand and the wall at the end of the room opened exposing a corridor. He spoke to the second figure before quickly leaving. Harry tried to follow; however, as he began to walk towards the opened door, the second figure grabbed him.

"Good luck," the figure said.

"Thanks," Harry replied as he shrugged off the figure's arm and walked into the corridor. He gasped, though, when he saw a massive winding staircase that seemed to go on forever.

"Oh," Harry said as he stared up the massive spiral staircase. "I really hate fortune cookies."

&&&

Tonks and Ginny were scared. It was almost time for breakfast, but Harry was still passed out on the floor of the Slytherin common room.

"What do we do?" Ginny asked nervously.

"I don't know. I mean, what can we do?" Tonks said.

"If we aren't at breakfast everyone will wonder why. I guess we could say we slept in..." Ginny said, only to stop when Harry groaned, stood up, and began looking around.

"Harry?" Ginny said hesitantly.

"Harry!" Tonks shouted happily.

"Who are you?" Harry demanded.

"Harry it's us. It's Ginny and Tonks," Ginny said frightened.

"Harry don't you remember?" Tonks asked fearfully.

"Yes, but what is this place?" Harry asked as he continued to look around.

"Harry, it's the Slytherin Common Room," Ginny said her eyes widening.

"That didn't really explain anything, you know? How do I find my form?" Harry asked quickly.

"Harry...are you still under the effects of the potion?" Tonks asked.

"Wow, you've read a fortune cookie," Harry said sarcastically.

"You drank the Animagus Potion, Harry," Ginny explained.

"Do you remember anything?" Tonks asked weakly.

"A journey where?" Harry asked, staring at neither girl.

Ginny was now officially panicked. "Tonks, he's got to still be under the effect of the Potion," she said.

"I know, I'm going to tell Dumbledore that you and Harry are sleeping in. That should keep them from asking too many questions. Hopefully, whatever is happening will be over soon," Tonks said as she left the common room and quickly raced out of the dungeons and towards the Great Hall.

Ginny was so busy watching Tonks leave that she didn't notice that Harry was walking towards the exit of the common room. When he began to walk past her though, Ginny realized what he was doing and grabbed his shoulder. "Harry, you have to stay here."

"Thanks," Harry replied as he shrugged off Ginny's hand and exited the common room. "Oh. I really hate fortune cookies," he said blandly as he walked out.

Ginny followed him out of the common room into the dungeons. She heard him mumble something before he ran into the nearest open classroom. Ginny watched bewildered as Harry ran around the perimeter of the room before exiting back into the hall. He ran a few more feet before he reached the next classroom, which he entered and proceeded to run around the perimeter again. By the time Harry was out of the dungeons, he had run around every classroom, a few large storage closets, and two massive lecture rooms. Ginny could only watch in astonishment as Harry seemed to try to run himself into exhaustion.

When they exited the dungeons, Ginny looked around nervously to make sure no teachers were near them. Harry, though, looked

absolutely confused. Ginny was about to say something when Harry's expression drastically changed into one of terror. She watched as Harry's eyes began to bulge out as he quickly started frantically turning in every direction.

Harry drew his wand and cast the *luminos* spell. He then frantically began waving it around like mad. He slowly began backing up before yelling, "Reducto!"

Ginny's eyes widened in shock as Harry fired off the blasting curse at a spot on the wall. Her shock turned to horror though when he began casting *Stupefies* as quick as he could before turning towards the staircase at the end of the hall.

Since none of the spells were directed at her, Ginny decided to follow him at a distance. Every now and then, Harry would stop, duck down, or fire a stunning spell in a random direction, but he continued to climb the stairway.

When he reached the fourth floor, he stopped going up the stairs, and ran down a corridor. Ginny watched from the distance as Harry's legs suddenly gave out and he fell to his knees. Harry seemed to be mumbling to himself, but Ginny was too far away to hear anything. She was about to make sure he was alright when Harry started to shake and scream out in pain as his body began to change.

First came the wings. Massive black wings. Leathery skin-like wings like those of a bat, but thickly scaled along the blades of bone. Boney claws on the tips of the wings were white and sharp looking. The wings were vast and more than large enough to support the weight of a human.

Harry's skull began to shift, quickly losing any resemblance of humanity. His skull became wider and longer and a set of long ram horns unrolled from the sides of its forehead. Thin spikes that looked a bit like porcupine quills sprouted from his neck and spine. His eyes grew larger and began blazing bright green. What registered the most, though, was that his eyelids were horizontal. When he blinked, the eyelids came in from the left and right instead of top and bottom. His

skin was now very dark and Ginny saw a forked tongue and a vicious set of six inch teeth when he opened his mouth.

Harry's body continued to change and soon a large tail emerged; thick and whip-like it sprouted from just above his buttocks. It flowed out and tapered for a good five feet before reaching a spear-headed point. The creature's knees bent in the opposite direction from a human's while the ankles were the same. Harry's hands were replaced with three talons while his arms and legs thickened.

But as quickly as he took the form, he began to change back. With a howl of pain, the bestial Harry began to regain his human body. When Harry was finally back to normal, he smiled for a moment before his eyes rolled to the back of his head and he passed out.

&&&

Harry was exhausted. He had just finished climbing one of the largest staircases he had ever seen. When he finally reached the top, he opened the lone door, and stepped through it.

His eyes widened when he saw that he was now in some kind of massive cavern. He was standing in the dead center of the cavern unable to see anything. There wasn't a single light in the entire place. Harry was about to start walking when there was a massive explosion followed by a single flash of white light.

Since the flash of light came from behind him, Harry was not blinded by the sudden flood of light. His eyes adjusted fine to the light and he looked around the cavern.

What he saw, though, made him want to scream. All around him were different sized stone monsters. Some were as small as his Aunt Marge's pit bulls, but others were at least twenty feet tall. All the statues had several things in common, though. They all had a pair of wings, sharp teeth, some sort of tail, and sharp claws. They also all appeared to be snarling at some unseen enemy.

Harry started to walk towards the nearest one when the light started to fade. As soon as the light began to disappear, the statues all

began to shake. Harry immediately started to back up away from them; however, he was still close enough to see the nearest stone statue. Harry watched in growing horror as one of the stone arms broke apart only to reveal a real arm, complete with a sharp claw, which began to attack the rest of the stone.

Harry quickly drew his wand and shouted, "Lumos." The lighting spell lit up a good portion of the cavern. Harry could only back up in terror. All around him, the stone creatures were coming to life and attacking the stone that held them in place. There was a loud crack, and Harry turned his wand back onto the nearest statue. The creature had managed to tip itself over, smashing the stone completely.

The creature flexed its wings and let out a high pitched screech. It then turned its snarling face and looked right at Harry, exposing its massive teeth.

Harry quickly pointed his wand and shouted the most destructive curse he knew, "Reducto!"

The explosion curse struck the creature's chest; however, apart from making the creature madder, it didn't seem to have much of an effect.

"Stupefy!" Harry shouted quickly. The spell seemed to have some effect on the creature as it caused it to slow down slightly, though not stunning it. As fast as he could, Harry turned around and started to run down the cavern, firing stupefies in every direction. He could hear the roars of the gargoyles that were slowly coming to life all around him. He ran for what seemed like ten minutes before he had to stop.

In front of him was a massive stone temple. There were small stairs that seemed to lead to a door. Harry could see some light coming from underneath it and deciding that it was his best chance to escape the gargoyles, Harry quickly ran towards the room.

Harry felt his legs start to burn with every step. He had already run so much and his body was getting tired. There was a loud screech from behind him and Harry dropped to his knees and started to wildly fire stunners down the stairs. Against his body's wishes, Harry forced himself up and continued to climb the stairs.

After what felt like an eternity, Harry reached the room with the light shining from under its door. He approached the door, opened it, quickly stepped inside, and slammed the door closed. Much to Harry's horror, the room actually was a massive hallway which seemed to stretch for eternity.

Harry began to walk down the massive hallway until he couldn't go on any longer. He felt his feet starting to give out underneath him. He fell to his knees and hung his head in complete exhaustion. There was a massive screech and Harry forced himself to look up. When Harry's eyes met the large winged creature's, it was as though a light flashed in his brain.

You're the reason for this journey, aren't you? He thought, too tired to actually speak the words. The creature seemed to understand, though. Its large body was just over six feet tall with large bat-like wings. The head was ferocious looking, with massive teeth and two horns protruding from the skull. The arms were lean, yet muscular, and led to hands with three sharp claws. The most defining feature, though, had to be its tail. It swept back and forth like a serpent and had a sharp dagger-like tip.

Harry could only look up at the intimidating creature and fight to remain conscious.

The creature extended one of its clawed hands and placed it on Harry's head. Harry's eyes widened for a moment as he felt his magic flare. He looked up at the creature and watched as it transformed into himself, unaware of his own body changing into its duplicate.

"Your journey is complete," the creature Harry said as it turned back into a beast and disappeared.

Harry smiled. Just before he fell back into unconsciousness, a powerful voice seemed to echo from all around him.

"Gargoyle!"

Slytherin Common Room, Hogwarts

Harry woke up in his bed, his entire body sorer than it had ever been before. "Ugh," he said weakly. He attempted to get up, but when he tried to move his legs, he groaned again.

A few moments later, the door was thrown open and Ginny and Tonks rushed into the room. "Harry, are you okay?" Tonks demanded.

"I feel like I've run around the castle a dozen times before I was mauled by a dragon," Harry groaned.

"Well, you probably succeeded to run around the castle that many times," Ginny said.

"What are you talking about?" Harry asked.

"Harry, you were hallucinating! Now, tell me why you drank that stupid potion, especially today!" Tonks barked.

"I wasn't thinking, I was just so eager to find my form," Harry said honestly.

Tonks punched him in the leg, causing Harry to scream. "That was for making me worry! Ginny came rushing into the Great Hall during breakfast and told me you had passed out on the fourth floor. Do you know where on the fourth floor you passed out, Harry?" Tonks demanded.

"Err, no," Harry said, dreading what she was about to say.

"In front of bloody McGonagall's office! What would have happened if she had decided to leave breakfast early and found you there like that?" Tonks shouted.

"I'm sorry," Harry said earnestly. "But, hey, I didn't know it would be like that. I thought it would be like a dream or something."

"Well, had you read the letter Lucius included with the book, you would have known what to expect!" Tonks barked.

"I was an idiot. I get that," Harry groaned.

"Good!" Tonks said before calming down enough to ask, "So, did you at least find your form?"

"Yes," Ginny and Harry said together.

"How do you know?" Harry asked Ginny.

"I watched as you turned into some sort of demon, Harry," Ginny said.

Harry could only grin and shake his head. "I'm not a Demon, Ginny, I'm a Gargoyle," he said proudly.

"A Gargoyle," Tonks said, completely stunned.

"That's what that thing was?" Ginny asked.

"Yep, I'm a Gargoyle, a real nasty looking one, too," Harry said with a grin.

"I'll say," Ginny said.

"That's...that's amazing." Tonks was clearly surprised.

"I know, I can't wait to start researching them," Harry said.

"Sounds like fun, but we have to get to dinner," Ginny said.

"Oh, you're right. Harry, get dressed," Tonks commanded, "dinner starts in five minutes."

"But I'm so sore!" Harry complained.

"You're the one who was stupid enough to take a hallucinogen on Christmas day. Now, we covered for you during breakfast and lunch, but if you don't show up for dinner, Dumbledore will start getting curious. All he did was ask about you today," Tonks said.

"Bastard, like he actually cares," Harry grumbled darkly.  
Great Hall, Hogwarts.

It took nearly twenty minutes for Harry to get out of bed, shower, and put on some clothes. When he eventually made it downstairs, he found a very hungry and impatient Ginny and Tonks, who dragged him to the Great Hall.

The first thing that Harry noticed when he entered the Great Hall was that just like last Christmas, the four house tables were pushed against the wall. The second thing Harry noticed was that everyone stopped eating when they arrived.

"Ah, Mr. Potter, you've finally decided to join us," Snape sneered.

ATTACK. A vicious voice demanded from somewhere in Harry's mind. Harry shook his head and fought back the sudden urge to punch his Head of House and made his way to an open seat next to Flitwick and a teacher he didn't know. "Harry, Happy Christmas." Flitwick said with a smile.

"Happy Christmas, Professor," Harry said pleasantly as Tonks and Ginny sat next to him.

"Happy Christmas, Ms. Tonks," The other professor said.

"Happy Christmas, Professor Vector. How are you?" Tonks asked.

"I'm fine, dear. Filius and I were just talking about you two, actually," Vector said.

"Really?" Tonks asked curiously.

"Professor Vector is doing her best to get any information about Mr. Potter out of me so that she can recruit him for Arithmancy next year," Flitwick said with a smile.

"Really, Filius, you make it sound so devious. I simply was inquiring about what classes Filius thought you would take next year, Mr.

Potter. I then pointed out that you, Ms. Tonks, were one of my best students, and that I should ask you to mention Arithmancy to Mr. Potter. I simply don't believe, Mr. Potter, that you are choosing Care of Magical Creatures and Divination like Filius attests," Vector said.

Tonks choked on some pumpkin juice before cracking up into fits of laughter. When half the staff stopped their conversation to find out what was so funny, Tonks tried to control herself. "Sorry, ma'am, but there is no way Harry is not going to be taking Arithmancy next year," Tonks said.

"Is that so, Tonks? I'll have you know that I have a reason to learn about some Magical Creatures," Harry said.

"So I've been teaching you everything I learn in Arithmancy this year for nothing? Fine, I guess I'll just have to stop," Tonks said curtly.

After Tonks finished talking, the entire table fell silent. Harry could practically feel Snape's sneer and Dumbledore's twinkling eyes staring at him. Finally, Vector decided to break the silence. "Has Ms. Tonks truly been teaching you everything she learned this year?" Vector asked, slightly astonished.

Harry looked around the table and saw that everyone was actually waiting for his response. Deciding to have some fun with McGonagall, Harry said, "Professor Vector, you'd be surprised at what five very ambitious Slytherins can do when they put their minds to it."

This statement seemed to catch the attention of the rest of the staff. "Really Potter, do you honestly expect us to believe that you and four other Slytherins have learned Arithmancy from Ms. Tonks?" Snape said.

ATTACK! DEFEND YOUR HONOR! Harry once again tried to push past these thoughts; however, he happened to agree with them and a vicious sneer made its way onto his face, surprising most the staff. "No sir, I don't ask you to believe that myself and four other Slytherins learned Arithmancy from Tonks; however, I expect everyone else to believe that myself and some other Slytherins have

learned the basics of Ancient Runes and Arithmancy from Tonks,” Harry said strongly.

“Detention, Potter, I hope you like sorting eels eye on Christmas,” Snape said darkly.

A mental image of Snape being raked across the chest and impaled by his talons popped into Harry’s head, causing him to smile menacingly.

“Severus, really, I think that you are being too harsh on Harry. After all, it is Christmas and Ms. Tonks said he has been feeling ill all day,” Dumbledore said, doing his best to stop the two from crossing wands at Christmas dinner.

“Very well, Headmaster. Potter, you won’t have detention if you can prove you know Arithmancy. I’m sure professor Vector wouldn’t mind asking you some questions?” Snape said viciously.

“I don’t mind at all. I’ve only heard good things about Professor Vector and her teaching style,” Harry said as he turned to face the surprised Arithmancy teacher.

“Very well, Mr. Potter. What is the Co-Elation Equivalency?” Vector asked.

“The Co-Elation Equivalency is the belief that when one breaks down a spell into a numeric value, the number of sevens that appear on the spell chart determines the power of the spell. The most well known example are the Unforgivables, which when graphed have a never ending number of sevens. Since no magical shield has a repeating number of sevens on a spell graph, Arithmancers believe the Unforgivables will remain unblockable until a shield is found that has a repeating number of sevens,” Harry explained effortlessly.

“Outstanding, Mr. Potter, a very concise and accurate answer,” Vector said as the other professors nodded in agreement.

“Thank you, ma’am.” Harry said proudly.

"Mr. Potter, who are the other Slytherins whom you say Ms. Tonks was teaching?" Flitwick asked curiously.

"Draco Malfoy and Blaise Zabini," Harry replied.

"Tell me, Ms. Tonks, are both Mr. Malfoy and Zabini catching onto the subject material as well as Mr. Potter?" Vector asked.

"Um, well, Harry and Blaise caught onto it really easily, but Draco started to struggle when they tried to break down some spells. Draco though is awesome at Ancient Runes. He probably knows more about them than I do at this point," Tonks said.

"Well, that is most impressive," Dumbledore said, his eyes twinkling merrily.

"Thank you, sir," Harry replied in a monotone.

"Tell me, Harry, who are the other two Slytherins in this group, you said that there were five of you?" Dumbledore asked.

"I would have thought that was obvious. It's Blaise, Draco, Ginny, Tonks, and I," Harry said casually.

"Mr. Potter, I believe that is four Slytherins and one Gryffindor," McGonagall said shortly.

"No, ma'am, you're mistaken. It's five Slytherins," Harry said simply.

"Ms. Tonks is a Gryffindor," McGonagall said with a slight edge in her voice.

"With all due respect, ma'am, Tonks isn't a Gryffindor; she's just in Gryffindor house," Harry said, causing Tonks to blush and McGonagall to purse her lips.

"Mr. Potter, I fail to see the difference," McGonagall said.

"The difference is that Tonks has every quality of a Slytherin, but she was sorted one year too early. Tonks isn't any more Gryffindor than I

am. The only real differences between us are where we sleep at night and which Quidditch team we play on,” Harry said as he mentally cheered at upsetting both McGonagall and Snape at Christmas dinner.

The silence after Harry’s final words seemed to stretch on forever. Finally it was a Ravenclaw first year who decided to speak up. “D...Does that mean that the person who is opening the chamber of secrets could be in a house besides Slytherin?”

“Indeed it does. The person opening the chamber could be a Gryffindor, Ravenclaw, or a Hufflepuff,” Dumbledore said, causing Flitwick, McGonagall, and Sprout to glare at him.

“Surely, you don’t suspect one of my Hufflepuffs, Headmaster,” Professor Sprout said, aghast.

“Or my Ravenclaws,” Flitwick said indignantly.

“No self-respecting Gryffindor would ever release Slytherin’s beast,” McGonagall said strongly.

“But it’s okay to blame Slytherins?” Harry asked, drawing all the attention back to him.

“Mr. Potter, no one is blaming the Slytherins,” McGonagall said.

“You’re right; they are all blaming me, which I can understand a little. After all, I’m a Parselmouth and a Slytherin, that must make me the reincarnation of Voldemort,” Harry spat, venom lacing every word he spoke.

The entire table, with the exception of Harry and Dumbledore, gasped at the name.

“Mr. Potter, people do not truly feel that way about you,” Dumbledore said in a soothing voice.

Harry felt his self-control beginning to slip. The desire to lash out at Dumbledore was too great. “What was the headline of the Daily

Prophet the day after everyone left for the holidays, again? Oh yes, now I remember, Albus Dumbledore contains Harry Potter at Hogwarts. You know, Headmaster, all it would have taken was a single letter from you to probably stop those articles about me. I mean, you are the single most influential wizard in the world, but I guess I should have expected you to just let the press have their way with me. After all, you've been a negligent guardian for my entire life, so why shouldn't you stop now that I actually know you're my guardian?" Harry said spitefully.

"Mr. Potter, apologize to the headmaster right now!" McGonagall said sharply.

Harry slowly and methodically turned his head to face McGonagall. "I'm not speaking to the headmaster; I'm speaking to my guardian. He forced me to cancel my holiday plans to get to know me, so I'd just like to know why he didn't lift a finger to help me. That's what a guardian is supposed to do, right?" Harry said.

"Potter, you can not just expect the headmaster to intervene on your behalf to stop a major news story," Snape barked.

SILENCE HIM! HE MUST LEARN HIS PLACE! "He didn't have to stop the story. All he would have had to do was tell the paper that he was aware of my Parseltongue for over a year and that the rumor of it being the mark of an evil wizard is not true. It would have been that simple. Instead, he said nothing and allowed the paper to turn me into the next Dark Lord," Harry said menacingly as he fought the urge to curse Snape.

"Harry, this is not the place for such a conversation; if you would like, we can return to my office," Dumbledore said.

"No sir, I'm rather sick of our little chats up in your office. I hope you don't expect to have anymore for the rest of the holiday. Andi!" Harry said strongly.

"Yes, Master Harry Potter?" Andi asked after appearing with a pop.

"I think I'm going to eat in the common room," Harry said as he stood up. "Happy Christmas, everyone," he said coldly as he walked out of the hall.

As soon as Harry started to walk away, Tonks and Ginny quickly got up and followed him out of the Great Hall. They left behind three shocked first years, several stunned teachers, a grumbling Snape, an angry McGonagall, and a depressed headmaster.

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After Harry's impromptu scolding of the headmaster in front of the entire staff, Harry stayed in the Slytherin Common Room for the rest of the break. Tonks and Ginny tried to get Harry to explain why he suddenly got so mad at the headmaster, but Harry wasn't able to give them an answer.

Truthfully, Harry had no idea what had caused the sudden rush of anger towards the headmaster, Snape, and even McGonagall, to a point. To take his mind off it, though, Harry threw himself into studying for the rest of the break. He practiced his dueling, Transfiguration, Charms, and Occlumency every day with Tonks and Ginny. Harry also asked Andi to raid the library for every book about Gargoyles. Andi hadn't disappointed and brought back nearly fifty books that referenced the rare magical creatures. It was in the book *Magical Creatures of the Night* that Tonks found the reason for Harry's impromptu outburst.

::Flashback::

"Harry, I think I know why you were suddenly so angry at Dumbledore," Tonks said as she looked up from her book.

"Oh?" Harry asked as he set down his own book.

"Yeah, read this," Tonks said as she pushed her book towards him.

Harry accepted the book and read the passage.

Gargoyles

These powerful creatures are incredibly rare and sought after in the magical world. The Gargoyle is a humanoid species known mostly for their loyalty, viciousness, and ability to shift into solid stone. Because the transformation to stone is quite painful, most Gargoyles live in deep caverns or pits where daylight rarely reaches them. Many rumors exist about this powerful species including (1) that their skin is completely resistant to magic, (2) that they are unable to move during the daylight, and (3) that they are a barbaric cannibalistic species.

All of those rumors are completely false. While a Gargoyle's skin is somewhat resistant to magic, it is actually on par with Dragon hide, allowing them to be harmed by magic, much like any other living creature.

It is also false that Gargoyles are frozen as soon as the sun comes out. Unlike Vampires, it takes prolonged exposure to sunlight to cause a Gargoyle to fully turn into stone, usually between 30 minutes to 2 hrs of direct sunlight. In fact, while exposed to the sunlight, a Gargoyle is the most dangerous. The hardening of its skin causes a Gargoyle to undergo a painful transformation; however, until the creature is completely stone, its skin will become more and more magically resistant. The Gargoyle will also become more aggressive and violent the longer it is in the sunlight.

Finally, the most grossly over-exaggerated rumor is that Gargoyles are a vicious, barbaric species that hunt humans and other Gargoyles for food. While there have been several reported Gargoyle attacks made against a human, the victims often turned out to have harmed a Gargoyle in the past. The fact is that out of the 1573 reported Gargoyle attacks against humans, 1127 of the humans were either attempting to poach for Gargoyle skin or were known to have tried to harm a Gargoyle in the past. This has given credence to a theory that Gargoyles are actually highly intelligent, yet vindictive creatures.

If this theory is to be believed, Gargoyles must have some sort of sense, which tells them when a human has harmed or tried to harm one of their own. The case which first gave credence to this theory took place during an excavation of an Egyptian Pyramid in the year 1798. Michael Streeter was working on the excavation when a

Gargoyle came to life from inside the tomb, decapitated him, and then flew off without harming another soul. After looking into Mr. Streeter's background, his fellow curse breakers found that he killed a young Gargoyle in Iceland almost forty years prior.

Many people discard this theory by claiming that Gargoyles do not have the intelligence to discern such things; however, a recent test has proven that a Gargoyle brain actually is similar, yet slightly less developed than that of a Goblin.

"I don't get it, Tonks," Harry said, lowering the book.

"Harry, what do really think about Dumbledore?" Tonks asked.

"You know what I think about him," Harry said harshly.

"I know, Harry, I know. Think about this, though; if it's true, all Gargoyles are vindictive to people that hurt them, I think the reason you lashed out at the headmaster and Snape was because you were experiencing your first flash of incorporating the Gargoyle's personality into yourself. I know you hold the headmaster responsible a little for what happened to your parents, you certainly hate him for making you live with the Dursleys, and now you find out he's your guardian, but he refuses to help you. I think that your resentment made the Gargoyle's vindictiveness come out in you," Tonks said.

"I didn't want to kill the headmaster, Tonks," Harry said, purposefully leaving out that he certainly wouldn't have minded killing Snape.

"Maybe you were angry at everything he's done to you, but that small sliver of doubt about whether it was intentional or not is what made you only embarrass him in front of the staff and not physically attack him, like it looked like you wanted to do to Snape," Tonks said.

"Maybe, Tonks, maybe," Harry said as he thought about why he would want to kill Snape, but only embarrass Dumbledore. Dumbledore had done much more to ruin his life than Snape ever had. After all, Snape was just a grouchy Potions teacher, right?

::End Flashback::

Last day of the Christmas holidays, Headmaster's Office, Hogwarts

Albus Dumbledore sat at his desk wondering where he had gone wrong with Harry Potter. He had hoped that they could put aside their differences over the spirit of Christmas and get to know each other; however, that proved to not be the case. If anything, forcing young Harry to stay at the school had been a terrible decision. Not only had it caused Harry to resent him more, but also it seemed to give the media more ammunition to use against the boy.

In retrospect, Dumbledore wished he could have gone back and redone so many things in the boy's life. He should have gotten involved in Harry's life at a young age. If he had, then maybe Harry would have seen him as a surrogate uncle, instead of a failed guardian.

It pained Albus that Lily and James' child had such a low opinion of him. The recent fiasco with the press only seemed to further Harry's resentment towards him. Albus had thought about Harry's words from Christmas dinner every day since they were spoken to him, and everything Harry had said had been the truth. He had failed miserably at protecting Harry from the press, but he was having a difficult enough time keeping the Chamber of Secrets from becoming public knowledge. Still, he should have anticipated that there would have been some sort of backlash against Harry's parseltongue being revealed. Something as simple as writing an open letter to be printed in the Daily Prophet would have gone a long way in stopping the horrible accusations that no twelve year old boy should ever have had to face.

Albus' brooding was stopped when the fire to his office flared and his deputy headmistress stepped out of it.

"Albus, you must stop torturing yourself like this," Minerva said the moment she exited the fire.

"How can I not, Minerva? Everything Harry said was indeed true; I have been a terrible guardian for him," Albus admitted sadly.

"Albus, you couldn't let Lucius Malfoy get guardianship of Harry, we both know that he is a Death Eater," Minerva said

"At the time, I thought the same as you, Minerva, but Harry seems to have started to truly resent me. I had hoped so much to get to know him this break," Albus said weakly.

"You must let this go, Albus. Harry is just one student; you are the headmaster of Hogwar..." Minerva said.

"Yet I am the guardian to only one of the students at this school, Minerva. I should have spoken to Harry about all of this years ago, last year at the very least. So many things have happened, and I do not know what I can do to fix them," Dumbledore said sadly.

"You are only human, Albus, you can make mistakes," Minerva said as Fawkes trilled in agreement.

"I know, but it seems that my few mistakes often have much more far-reaching consequences. I can only pray to Merlin that Harry does not become one of them," Dumbledore replied.

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Special thanks to John3776 and Miranda Flairgold. I used aspects from both of these authors' stories in this chapter. I suggest reading anything written by either author, as they are both excellent writers. Finally, thank you to EvilDime and Jon3776 for doing the beta work for this chapter.

## Chapter 23

### The Heir of Slytherin?

The month of January progressed painfully slowly for Harry.

When school resumed, Tonks and Ginny took it upon themselves not only to tell Draco and Blaise about Harry's little stunt with the Animagus Potion, but also how it affected him during dinner. Draco found the entire situation hilarious and broke down into fits of laughter while Blaise was more interested in questioning Harry about his form.

Soon, classes resumed and while Harry continued to have no real difficulties with the subject matter, it was clear that after his fight with the headmaster at Christmas dinner, his teachers didn't know how to treat him.

Flitwick tried to pretend that nothing was different, but Harry had gotten to know his Charms teacher well enough to notice that Flitwick seemed to be walking on eggshells around him. They eventually had a conversation after one of their tutoring sessions about what happened, and why Harry felt the way he did towards the headmaster.

While Harry did not bring up anything to do with the Dursleys, Flitwick was still sympathetic when he heard how Dumbledore had nixed his Christmas plans and how he all of a sudden wanted to get to know him after being absent for twelve years. Even though Flitwick often played the devil's advocate and defended Dumbledore's desire to get to know him, after their talk things slowly started to go back to normal.

It was Professor Snape who took the most offence at what Harry had said at Christmas dinner. Snape tore into Harry for his lack of respect after the first Potions class. During the meeting, it took every ounce of will power Harry possessed to ignore the enraged gargoyles in the back of his mind that was screaming for Snape's head on a pike.

Literally.

Harry would probably still be getting lectured by Snape had he not temporarily lost control of his Animagus persona and started to growl

at his head of house. The growl cost Harry 50 points and two weeks' worth of detention with Filch, but since then, Snape was refusing to acknowledge Harry's existence, which made Harry believe he got the better end of the deal.

As much as Harry hated being talked down to by Professor Snape, Lockhart's tortuous talk about the dangers of creating a feud with another famous person was much worse.

The only teacher who reacted positively to Harry's fight with the Headmaster at Christmas was Professor Sinistra. The Astronomy teacher held him after class and sympathetically told him that if he ever needed to vent his problems she would listen.

The strangest reaction came from Professor Sprout, though. The Herbology teacher seemed to be unsettled by him and wouldn't ever look him in the eyes. However, it wasn't until Neville revealed that Sprout had warned her Hufflepuffs, who in turn warned him, against spending time alone with Harry that Harry realized how frightened Sprout was by his presence. Another surprise, though, came from Professor McGonagall.

::Flashback::

"Mr. Potter, please have a seat," McGonagall said sternly.

Harry simply nodded and put his bag on the ground. "What is it, ma'am?" he asked.

"Mr. Potter, I believe we need to clear the air between us. I think that it's obvious that since you and the headmaster started fighting, our relationship began to suffer as well. I would like to know what you believe I could do to correct that?" McGonagall asked straightforwardly.

"I don't know, ma'am," Harry admitted neutrally while trying to ignore the gargoyle inside him, which was demanding for an apology.

"I see. Mr. Potter, I will admit that I was not thrilled with how you went about getting revenge on the headmaster after he was able to maintain guardianship of you..." McGonagall said.

"Revenge? You think I stopped that stupid Muggleborn bill for revenge?" Harry asked in a patronizing tone.

McGonagall peered over the rim of her spectacles. "You are telling me you did not?"

"I'll admit hurting the headmaster was an appealing addition, but I was planning on speaking out against that stupid bill before I found out the headmaster helped write it," Harry said dismissively.

"I see. Was there a logical reason you decided to derail one of the most important bills for the advancement of muggleborns in our society's history?" McGonagall practically demanded.

Harry stifled a growl that was threatening to form at McGonagall's tone. "You mean besides the fact that Lord Macmillan attempted to manipulate me into voicing my support for it this summer?" Harry snapped.

McGonagall raised an eyebrow at the challenging conduct. "I see. So you were getting revenge, just not on the headmaster," McGonagall stated.

"Merlin! What is it with everyone and revenge? 40,000 Galleons is too much money to give away on such a pointless cause. I firmly believe everything I said in front of the Wizengamot, ma'am. If Granger can be the top student, why can't other muggleborns crack the top ten? If purebloods have so much of an advantage, why aren't more in the top ten? I mean, Boot's a halfblood and he's second in my year. There are also purebloods who are terrible at magic! Just look at Crabbe, Goyle, and Ron Weasley! They are purebloods, but every one of them is a horrible excuse for a wizar..."

"Mr. Potter, if you could please refrain from insulting your peers," McGonagall interrupted.

"Very well, ma'am," Harry said neutrally, "All I was pointing out was that if a muggleborn would just put forth the effort, they would be fine."

"Do you truly believe that, Mr. Potter?" McGonagall said exasperatedly. She had been prepared to deal with a vengeful student, but not to start an ideological debate.

"I think purebloods have more ministry connections, wealth, prestige, and knowledge about wizarding traditions, but none of that matters when you are studying how to brew a potion or writing an essay on switching spells," Harry said simply.

McGonagall nodded her head in acceptance. "Mr. Potter, I can't say that I agree with you, but you seem to firmly believe in what you do. I was hoping we might be able to re-start our private lessons," she said.

NOT. WITHOUT. AN. APOLOGY! the gargoyle practically screamed, causing Harry to press a finger against his temple.

"Mr. Potter, are you feeling alright?" McGonagall asked.

"I'm fine, ma'am," Harry responded instantly as he mentally put up every Occlumency barrier he had to separate himself from the gargoyle; however, the gargoyle clearly didn't like being divided from his main consciousness and began attacking the barriers, causing Harry's headache to increase. "I don't know if I want to restart my lessons with you. I've been doing well on my own, and I don't want to have to go back and re-read stuff I've already learned because you doubt how far I've gotten."

"Mr. Potter, I am aware that you possess at least one advanced tome on Transfiguration. That became abundantly clear to me after your duel with Mr. Weasley. So if you tell me you have reached a certain level, I will test you, and if you pass we will continue from there," McGonagall conceded.

"That sounds fair, ma'am, but what about Dumbledore? I don't see us improving our relationship anytime soon," Harry said as he reluctantly dropped the barriers keeping the gargoyle at bay.

McGonagall pursed her lips. "...I will do my best to ignore whatever matter you and your guardian have with each other. I just ask that from now on you have your arguments behind closed doors and not in front of the entire staff. Also, please refer to him as Professor Dumbledore or headmaster when you speak of him in public. I know he is your guardian and you may call him what you wish when you are alone with him, but please maintain a certain amount of respect for the headmaster of this school," McGonagall said simply.

"Alright, I'll give our lessons another try, ma'am, but if I get the suspicion you are treating me unfairly because Dumbledore and I have had another argument, I won't hesitate to stop them," Harry said firmly.

"Agreed, Mr. Potter. Now, how far along are you?" McGonagall asked.

::End Flashback::

It took nearly four hours for McGonagall to confirm that Harry was almost completely finished with basic fourth year Transfiguration. Needless to say, she was completely stunned at his amazing improvement.

With McGonagall resuming their private lessons and the Christmas break reinvigorating Flint's desire to win the Quidditch cup, Harry found that any free time was quickly being taken away from both him and Draco. Flint's early Saturday morning practices effectively ended the group's miniature dueling club. Tonks, Ginny, and Blaise tried to find another day where they could practice, but it was just impossible between all the scheduling conflicts.

Because he no longer had as much free time, Harry soon found himself unable to continue several aspects of his training. As much as he hated it, Harry had to stop trying to dissect Le Roché's theory of summoning Lethifolds, he also had to stop learning and practicing new dueling spells. In fact, Harry only had about one free hour every night when he wasn't working on homework, Quidditch, tutoring Neville, or practicing with Flitwick and McGonagall.

Even with so little free time, Harry had made great strides over the month of January. He had finally completed the first stage of Occlumency by finishing his 30th mental wall, and Salazar had begun suggesting ways of categorizing and sorting all his memories. This, Harry found out, was easier said than done. Reliving his entire life with the Dursleys proved to be nothing short of a living hell, leaving Harry and an enraged gargoyle in a foul mood every time he practiced Occlumency.

Tonks and Draco were very sympathetic towards him; however, since no one else knew of his past, they thought he was just being standoffish and unnecessarily angry. After a particularly bad incident where Harry hexed both of Nott's arms off during Charms, Flitwick had tried to find out what was the matter with him.

::Flashback::

Harry sat in his favorite teacher's office, his head throbbing from sorting some of the worst memories of his life. The gargoyle randomly sending images of the Dursleys missing limbs or eyes didn't help any.

Harry had thought living with the Dursleys was bad the first time around, but reliving every time he was ever beaten, called a freak, and thrown into his cupboard, combined with an obsessive desire for revenge from his animagus persona, was worse. At least when he lived it the first time, he had some sort of control over the events and a chance to come out alright. Watching these memories, though, just left him feeling powerless and enraged.

The sound of the door opening and closing caused Harry's head to throb a little harder and his headache to increase.

"Mr. Potter, what happened? Mr. Nott was just trying to rouse you from Occlumency," Flitwick asked, looking rather concerned.

"I'm sorry, sir, but I've moved on to sorting through all my memories. I-I was reliving a particularly bad memory when Nott decided to shake me awake," Harry admitted.

"I see. Harry, I've noticed that you've been rather short with all your friends, lately. I've heard grumblings from Ms. Bones, Ms. Abbot, Ms. Weasley, and Mr. Zabini about you being rather angry with just about everyone after your Occlumency practices," Flitwick said.

"So?" Harry barked angrily.

"Please, Harry, try to relax. Can you explain to me what happened that is causing you to act in such an angry manner? I believe Ms. Tonks and Mr. Malfoy know, as they have taken everything you've said and done to them without complaint," Flitwick said.

"What could I possibly have done to them?" Harry demanded.

"Harry, it is things just like that. You've become rather hostile towards everyone. If this continues, I will not allow you to practice Occlumency during my class and during our sessions," Flitwick said calmly.

"That's not fair, professor," Harry said, echoing the gargoyle's thoughts.

"Harry, could you please tell me what the problem is?" Flitwick asked softly.

"Nothing is wrong, I just need to get past some memories," Harry hissed angrily.

"Very well, Harry. I'll give you another few weeks to work through those memories, but if you have not calmed down by then, I'm going to need for you to find something else to do during class," Flitwick said.

"Yes sir," Harry said as he stood up and quickly swept out of the office.

::End Flashback::

After Flitwick issued his ultimatum, Harry went to Tonks and reluctantly asked for her help in keeping his anger in check.

Eventually, they decided that Tonks would stun him every time she thought his anger was starting to get away from him after practicing Occlumency.

It was an extreme decision, and Tonks had practically begged him to just tell some people about his past or ask McGonagall for help with controlling the gargoyle's emotions. Harry had thought about it, but ultimately refused. The nightmares the press would cause for him if it ever got out that he had been abused and had lived in a cupboard under the stairs was enough to stop him, and like any Slytherin he detested people knowing his secrets.

Unfortunately, a side-effect of not asking McGonagall for help was that Harry wasn't able to accomplish much as far as the actual animagus transformation was concerned. In fact, the only physical change he was able to do was to make his skin darken slightly, but even that was difficult to hold for longer than a minute or two.

Since it was unlikely that he would meet a real gargoyle anytime soon, Harry had taken to reading about their anatomy and psychology every night before he went to sleep. It wasn't as good as first hand experience, but it was the best he could do; however, Harry soon discovered that the more he practiced the transformation, the more his and the gargoyle's personality seemed to merge.

February 4th, Quidditch Pitch, Hogwarts

Harry, Draco, and Ginny all sat in the Ravenclaw stands wearing gold in their support of Tonks and Gryffindor. Blaise had abandoned them to support Susan and Hufflepuff with Hannah. Draco had wanted to go with him, but Harry threatened to tell Salazar that Draco insulted him and then release the angry snake in Draco's bed later that night. Draco paled considerably at the threat, but still protested against wearing the "filthy Gryffindor colors," especially since Slytherin needed Gryffindor to lose to get back into the chase for the house cup. The Slytherins had absolutely destroyed Ravenclaw the week before with a score of 340-50, and a Gryffindor loss would put them right back into the race.

Lee Jordan was once again announcing the names of the players, and Harry clapped loudly when Jordan announced Tonks.

"Hey Potter, shut up and get out of our stands!" a loud Ravenclaw shouted from above him.

As Draco barked back an insult in Harry's defense, Harry simply tuned out the annoying Ravenclaw and watched as Tonks flew to the ground and stood behind Oliver Wood. Harry heard Madam Hooch's magically enhanced whistle go off as the two teams shot into the air.

"Harry, aren't you suppose to be taking notes?" Draco asked nudging Harry out of his daze.

"What's that?" Harry asked.

"I said, aren't you supposed to be taking notes on Diggory? You won't be able to beat him as easily as you crushed Chang!" Draco reminded him, saying the last part loud enough to earn several scowls from the Ravenclaws sitting around them.

"Draco, give the Ravenclaws a break, it's not their fault they are rebuilding, and besides, I know all I need to know about Diggory already," Harry said confidently.

"Oh yeah? How come during the strategy session two nights ago you couldn't remember if he likes to feint or not?" Draco asked.

"Draco, not to be cocky, but I'm the best seeker in the school. Diggory is going to mark me like everyone else does," Harry boasted as he continued to watch Tonks circle the pitch looking for the snitch.

"So you're the best seeker in the school, you know exactly what Diggory will do, but you're not cocky? How does that work?" Ginny asked curiously.

"Luck," Harry replied as Hufflepuff scored, making the score 20-20.

"Yeah, luck or just being an arrogant bastard," Ginny replied, earning a chuckle from Draco.

"Yep, definitely one of the two," Harry said as Tonks went into a deep dive.

"Has she seen the Snitch? Tonks, catch the bloody thing; I want to get out of these filthy clothes!" Draco shouted loudly.

Harry, Ginny, and Draco watched and Tonks continued to dive towards the ground only to level off and proceed to race towards the stands, Diggory was now in hot pursuit. Harry watched as Tonks extended her hand to catch the Snitch when Madam Hooch blew her whistle. Everyone looked around in confusion as to what had caused the sudden interruption of the game.

Madam Hooch was on the ground, adamantly speaking with Professor Sprout before quickly running towards Dumbledore and speaking to him. After a few moments, Dumbledore placed the Soronus Charm on himself and said, "Everyone please return to your house dormitories immediately. This game and the Quidditch season have been suspended. Again, prefects, please lead your houses to the dormitories. Professors McGonagall, Snape, and Flitwick, please meet me and Professor Sprout in the hospital wing."

Harry and Draco shared a stunned look with Ginny before they got up, quickly left the Ravenclaw stands, and found the nearest Slytherin prefect, who did a double take before sneering at their outfits. They soon joined the other Slytherins and began their walk back to the dungeon.

"Draco? Draco, is that you?" A very unwelcome voice called out.

"Yes Parkinson, Potter dressed me up like a Gryffindor," Draco grumbled.

"What is wrong with you, Potter! You're a pathetic excuse for a Slytherin. Why don't you walk with Millicent and I, Draco?" Pansy said, smiling.

"Actually, Parkinson, I nee..." Draco said.

"No Draco, I think Pansy is right, you should go with her," Blaise said as he came up behind Draco.

"Thank you. See, even Zabini can tell you are spending too much time with that halfblood and the blood traitor," Pansy said, shooting an evil look at Harry and Ginny.

"You wound me with your words, Parkinson. You should be careful who you are talking to before I decide to wound you," Harry threatened with an evil smirk.

"You're all talk, Potter," Bullstrode said.

"At least he doesn't have hair on his knuckles," Ginny said, causing Millicent to glare at her.

"Come, Draco, let's leave the halfblood and the poor blood traitor alone," Pansy said as she pulled Draco away, leaving him just enough time to mouth 'I hate you' to Blaise.

"Well, that was fun," Blaise said with a satisfied smile.

"Yeah, I'd say so, but what do you think happened? It must be serious to cancel the Quidditch season," Ginny said.

"I would have thought that was obvious, Ginny, there has been another attack," Harry said nonchalantly.

"That's what I was thinking, too. I wonder who it was," Blaise said calmly.

"Well, it couldn't have been the twins, unfortunately," Ginny said in jest.

"Yeah, pity. There is still hope for Granger or Thomas. Think if it turns out to be Thomas, Draco will pay for a party in the common room later tonight?" Harry asked.

"Hmm... maybe, but I doubt it was Thomas. Did you see that huge picture of the Gryffindor lion? I heard he draws those, so he was probably at the match," Blaise said.

"Well, Tonks said Granger never comes to Quidditch matches, so it could be her. I'll keep my fingers crossed at least," Harry said maliciously.

"From what Tonks told me, I wouldn't be surprised if she was crossing her fingers as well," Ginny admitted.

"What do you mean?" Harry asked.

"You mean you haven't noticed?" Ginny asked astonished.

"Noticed what?" Harry asked again.

"Tonks is really peeved at Granger. Apparently, all the know-it-all does anymore is study and write in her diary. Tonks didn't even get a Christmas present from her," Ginny explained.

"Well, she can't be studying that hard, I had to correct one of her Transfiguration tests and she only got an 'acceptable' on it. I would have given her a 'poor', except McGonagall would have most likely overruled me," Harry said.

"So Granger is starting to slip, huh? I never would have thought it possible, but her cauldron did almost exploded in Potions a few days ago," Blaise commented as the group began descending to the dungeons.

"Pity it didn't explode. I bet Snape would have loved to have a go at the Mudblood," Harry said.

Blaise was about to respond, but as soon as they entered the Slytherin common room, Draco shouted, "You're a dead man, Zabini!"

Blaise instantly took off towards the boys' dormitory, Draco giving chase.

February 14th, Great Hall

It turned out that the latest petrification victims were Penelope Clearwater, a sixth year Ravenclaw prefect, and Nearly Headless Nick, the Gryffindor Ghost. While the petrification of Penelope Clearwater shocked all the Ravenclaws, it was a Gryffindor who seemed to take the news the hardest. Unknown to anyone prior to the attack, Percy Weasley was actually dating the sixth year Ravenclaw prefect.

As much as Penelope's petrification frightened the school, especially since she was a halfblood, it was the petrification of Nearly Headless Nick that bothered everyone, including the Slytherins. After all, what could petrify a Ghost?

One good thing did come out of the latest attack, at least for Harry. Since he had been seen by almost every Ravenclaw at the Quidditch game, he was not considered responsible for this set of petrifications. Although a few idiots like Ron Weasley and his twin brothers loudly proclaimed how Harry could have attacked Clearwater and Nearly Headless Nick before the match, most of the student population realized that their number one suspect wasn't guilty.

Tonks, Harry, Draco, Blaise, and Ginny didn't have to put up with the Weasley twins today, though. Today was Valentine's day and because it fell on a Saturday, Dumbledore decided an impromptu Hogsmeade visit was in order to take everyone's minds off the Chamber of Secrets.

"You sure you don't want to go to Hogsmeade?" Draco asked again.

"Yes, Draco, I don't want to go. Seriously, who am I going to go with? The twins?" Tonks asked incredulously.

"She's got you there, Draco," Harry said.

"But it's Valentine's Day. Don't you want to get dressed up and go to Madam Puddifoot's like every other girl?" Draco asked again.

Tonks just stared at Draco. "Yeah Draco, I want to get dressed up and go to Madam Puddifoot's by myself on Valentine's day. While I'm

at it, I could buy some flowers and chocolate for myself, too!" Tonks snapped irritably.

"Dummy," Ginny said as she smacked Draco on the head.

"Watch it, Weasley," Draco said as he fixed his hair.

"Vain bastard," Blaise muttered, causing Draco to glare at him.

"At least we'll have most the castle to ourselves today. No Weasleys shouting that I'm the heir of Slytherin," Harry pointed out.

"You forgot Ron," Ginny pointed out.

"Yeah, but we can just hex that one if he's stupid enough to bother us," Harry said.

"I get to fire the first curse," Ginny proclaimed.

"Why you?" Draco challenged.

"Hey, I'm the one who's spending their Hogsmeade visit with you twerps, I should get to hex him first," Tonks said.

"All those in favor of letting Tonks hex Ron first today?" Blaise asked.

Draco, Ginny, Harry, Blaise, and Tonks all raised their hands.

"Congratulations, Tonks," Harry said.

"Thank you, Harry, I'll have to think of a good curse just for the little wanker," Tonks said with a devilish grin.

"I'm sure he's terrified already," Harry said with a smirk.

"I would have to disagree. Weasley looks absolutely giddy over there talking to the twins," Blaise said, gesturing over to the Gryffindor table.

"The twins are probably just telling him how they plan on setting off another dungbomb in the Slytherin common room. For the life of me, I

don't know how those two idiots ever found the bloody place," Ginny grumbled.

After breakfast, Harry and Tonks went to the library while Draco, Ginny, and Blaise went back to the common room.

"Harry?" Tonks said, looking up from her Charms homework.

"Yeah?" Harry asked.

"How do you control a transfigured and animated object in flight?" Tonks asked, frustrated.

Harry smirked; he knew how much Tonks hated asking him for help on her homework. "Why do you want to know?" Harry asked, his eyes dancing with laughter.

"Don't be a prat, just tell me already. It's Valentine's Day; I thought all guys had to be nice to girls today," Tonks said with a huff.

"Fine, the easiest way to do it is just to say the normal incantation for flight, Volo, while adding the animation incantation, Animatus, at the same time. So the incantation is Volo-animatus," Harry said.

Tonks quickly scribbled down everything he said and then asked, "And the wand movement?"

"Use the normal wand movement for Volo. If you have enough mental focus, you should be able to cast both spells without doing a ridiculously long wand movement," Harry explained as Tonks again wrote down what he said.

"Thanks," Tonks mumbled.

"Anyti..." Harry said.

"Hey Harry."

"Hey Tonks."

Harry and Tonks looked up and saw Blaise and Draco staring down at them. Both had equally goofy grins on their faces.

"What are you two doing here? I thought you were going back to the common room? And where's Ginny?" Harry asked, looking around.

"Oh, she's..." Draco said.

"There you two are. Merlin, what are you doing here? You tell me you want to play Exploding Snap, I go to the common room to get the cards while you two use the loo, and twenty minutes later I find you in the library," Ginny said with an annoyed huff.

"Oh sorry, Gin, I guess we forgot," Blaise said.

"Forgot? Why did you two come to the library anyway? Draco, you're the one who said you didn't want to become a bookworm like these two," Ginny said as she sat next to Harry.

"Hey, I'm not a bookworm," Harry said defensively.

"Yeah, neither am I," Tonks agreed.

"Sorry, you're not a book worm, P-Harry," Draco said.

"Yeah, and neither are you, Tonks," Blaise said.

"Whatever. What did you two want?" Tonks asked as she closed her Charms book.

Draco looked around for a moment before leaning in quietly. "We wanted to talk to you about the Chamber of Secrets," Draco whispered conspiratorially.

"Oh, what about it?" Harry asked curiously.

"How are you opening it?" Blaise asked.

"Huh?" Harry said, bewildered.

"How are you opening, mate. It's you, right? I know you've denied it and everything, but everyone petrified has had some connection to you," Draco said.

"Yeah, except I've never even spoken to Clearwater," Harry pointed out.

"But she's Weasley's girlfriend, and we all know how much you love Weasleys," Blaise pointed out.

"Okay, what's up with you two? Draco, Harry was with us during the last Quidditch match, unless you believe my idiot brothers and their rumors," Ginny practically spat.

"Have you heard their latest one? Apparently, I'm using an unknown dark curse on my victims. I wish I had unknown dark curses to use on those two," Harry said.

"Yeah, me to. By the way, Tonks, have you cursed Ron yet?" Ginny asked.

"No, little bugger left with his worthless brothers right after breakfast, and I haven't seen him since," Tonks complained.

"Yeah, little bastard deserves a good hexing. So, Harry, if you're not opening the chamber you must have an idea who is?" Draco asked.

"You know I have no clue, Draco, and personally I don't care. While I miss playing Quidditch, now that everyone knows it's not me opening the chamber, I couldn't care less about it. Besides, with the Quidditch season cancelled, Gryffindor can't win the cup this year. I bet McGonagall's mad as hell about that," Harry said with a broad smile.

"Yeah," Draco said dryly.

"We'll just beat you next year," Tonks said, rolling her eyes.

"Of course, Tonks," Harry said and patted her head condescendingly.

"Prat." Tonks said, shoving him away.

"So Tonks, do you know who might be opening the Chamber?" Blaise asked.

"Blaise, what's the sudden fascination with the bloody Chamber? I've got more important things to do than worry about some creature attacking mudbloods," Ginny said forcefully.

"Ginny!" Draco said in shock.

"What, it's alright for you and Harry to say mudblood and not me?" Ginny asked in a huff.

"I do believe that's the first time you've ever said it," Harry pointed out.

"Actually, it's the second time," Ginny mumbled.

"What was that?" Draco asked.

"I said it's my second time to use it. I was in Potions when this stupid Hufflepuff tripped and dropped some dragon's blood in my cauldron while it was still on the fire. Basically, it exploded right in my face, and it was only because my partner was able to grab me and pull me away that I didn't get badly burned. I was so mad that I just blurted it out at the girl. Snape took five points away for using foul language, but he took 40 points from Hufflepuff for ruining my potion, and he gave us full marks on the day," Ginny said, a smile tugging at the corners of her lips.

"Well, Tonks, I guess that just leaves you and Blaise. Who's going to be the last one to hold out saying mudblood?" Harry said, looking at his best friend expectantly.

"Well, I won't say it," Blaise said defiantly.

"We know, we know, the legendary Zabini neutrality. Merlin, your family must never have an opinion on anything, Blaise!" Ginny rolled her eyes.

"I never pegged you down as an idiotic blood purist, Ginny," Blaise barked.

Harry, Tonks, and Ginny each raised an eyebrow. "First of all, I'm not a blood purist. It just slipped in Potions and I don't dislike muggleborns in general, just certain ones, like Granger," Ginny said.

"Yeah, and since when do you dislike blood purists, Blaise?" Tonks asked.

"I know! What happened to the Zabini neutrality?" Harry asked as a wave of suspicion and paranoia from the gargoyle struck him.

"And why aren't you screaming at him for being a blood traitor, Draco?" Ginny asked.

"Well, dad told me to be nice to Blaise because he wants his dad's help on a Wizengamot bill," Draco said defensively.

Harry's eyes widened and he quickly drew his wand, pointing it between Draco and Blaise.

"Harry, what are you doing?" Tonks asked.

"Yeah, Harry, put down your wand," Ginny said.

"Tonks, in all the time that we've known Draco, have you ever heard him call Mr. Malfoy 'dad'?" Harry demanded.

It took Tonks a moment to put together what Harry was saying, but when she did, she quickly drew her own wand. "No, it's always been father," Tonks agreed, pointing her wand at Blaise.

"Tonks, Harry, what are you talking about?" Ginny demanded.

"That's not Draco and Blaise," Harry said quickly.

A split second after the words were out of Harry's mouth, the fake Draco and Blaise smashed four dungbombs on the floor, causing a

massive cloud of putrid yellow smoke. The two imposters quickly fled the library while Harry and Tonks wildly fired stunners.

"What the hell was that?!" Ginny asked as soon as she, Harry, and Tonks got clear of the putrid dungbomb smoke.

"That wasn't Draco and Blaise," Harry said.

"Think about it, Ginny. Draco and Blaise wouldn't just blow off a game of Exploding Snap without telling you. Then they just randomly showed up in the library and all of a sudden Blaise is calling you a blood purist and Draco gets all uppity about you saying mudblood. That wasn't them! Oh Merlin, Harry, they might be hurt! We need to tell a professor and find them!" Tonks exclaimed.

"You're right, let's go," Harry said.

Professor Snape's Quarters, Hogwarts

Severus Snape had just been forcibly awoken from his nap by his office alarm, which signaled that someone wanted to speak with him. Grumbling as he got up and walked to the floo, he promised to make whoever wanted something from him pay dearly.

"My office," he called out as he stepped into the floo. Once he exited the floo, he swept to his door, and opened it. He sneered as Potter, Tonks, and Weasley quickly made their way into his office. He was about to reprimand them for no reason when Tonks said, "Sir, something has happened to Draco and Blaise."

Severus felt his blood run cold. Surely Slytherin's monster hasn't attacked my godson? He's the perfect Slytherin! "Has there been another petrification?" Snape asked after using Occlumency to hide his emotions.

"Nosir," Harry said, resisting the urge to claw at his professor's face, "but something has happened to Draco and Blaise."

"What are you talking about then, Potter?" Snape barked.

ATTACK! SLASH! RIP! BITE! KILL! the gargoyle demanded, causing Harry to stop speaking and compose himself.

Tonks, seeing her best friend's predicament and knowing the Potion professor's short temper, quickly said, "It's like this, sir, Harry and I were in the library when Draco and Blaise showed up..."

"They completely blew off a game of Exploding Snap that we were supposed to play after breakfast," Ginny interrupted.

"Ms. Weasley, if you have a problem with Mr. Malfoy and Mr. Zabini standing you up for a game of Exploding Snap..." Snape sneered.

"Why don't you wait and hear the full story before you jump to conclusions, you ugly bat!" Harry spat as the gargoyle's anger slipped through.

Silence met Harry's outburst. Tonks and Ginny looked shocked that anyone would ever say something like that to Professor Snape, while Snape simply looked murderous.

"Detention, Potter," Snape said, shaking with rage.

"Sir, please, you don't understand! The Blaise and Draco that came into the library weren't the real Blaise and Draco," Tonks said hesitantly, clearly wary of having Snape's anger turned on her.

"What do you mean they weren't the real Blaise and Draco?" Snape demanded, his tone cold.

"Well, sir, this Draco got all confrontational when Ginny said 'mudblood'," Tonks said.

"Oh, and Blaise made a remark about blood purists," Ginny pointed out.

"And all they kept asking about was the Chamber of Secrets," Tonks said.

"What is your point?" Snape asked.

"Sir, Draco called his father 'dad'. In all the time I've known Draco, he's never once referred to Mr. Malfoy as 'dad'. When Harry and I pulled our wands and confronted him about it, the fake Blaise and Draco smashed four dungbombs under the table and ran out of the library," Tonks said.

Snape's mind was now racing. Ms. Tonks is right, that wasn't Draco and Mr. Zabini, but how did a student manage to...to...of course. "Polyjuice Potion," Snape sneered.

"Excuse me, sir?" Tonks asked.

"Polyjuice Potion. It's a rare potion, which turns the drinker into someone else for two hours. I've been having several ingredients stolen from me this year and all of them are used in Polyjuice Potion. Ms. Weasley, did Mr. Malfoy and Mr. Zabini make any stops before they were to meet you to play Exploding Snap?" Snape asked.

"They both said they were going to the loo and I didn't see them till I found them in the library fifteen minutes later," Ginny said.

Snape just nodded his head. "The final ingredient to the potion is a hair from the person you wish to turn into. I believe that Mr. Malfoy and Zabini were probably taken by surprise by someone. I shall alert the headmaster." Snape got up and made his way over to the fireplace, threw some floo powder in and said, "Headmaster?"

After a moment, Dumbledore's head appeared in the fire. "Yes, Severus?"

"Headmaster, Mr. Potter, Ms. Tonks, and Ms. Weasley are in my office. If what they have just told me is true, I believe someone has assaulted Mr. Malfoy and Mr. Zabini and used some of their hair to create Polyjuice Potion," Snape said.

"Severus, stand aside. I'm coming through," Dumbledore said warily.

Snape took a step back and a moment later Dumbledore exited the fireplace. "Alright, tell me what happened," he said.

Tonks and Ginny quickly repeated their explanation to Dumbledore while Harry remained silent. When the two girls finished explaining, Dumbledore said, "Well, this would certainly explain your missing ingredients, Severus; however, if the timeline Ms. Weasley gave you is correct, the two hours will be up soon and the culprits will revert to their normal selves."

"Indeed; however, if we can not find whoever did this, perhaps Mr. Malfoy and Zabini could identify the perpetrators," Snape said.

"Yes, that will be our best course of acti..." Dumbledore said as the door to Snape's office opened and Professor McGonagall walked in with a very disheveled Draco and Blaise.

"Is that the real you, Draco?" Harry asked.

"What the bloody hell are you talking about! Of course this is it the real me!" Draco practically spat.

"That's him," Tonk said knowingly.

"Merlin, what happened to you two?" Ginny asked.

"Somebody stunned us as we walked into the bathroom on the second dungeon level," Blaise said as he rubbed the back of his head.

"Were you able to see who they were?" Snape asked.

"How do you know there was more than one?" Blaise asked.

"Someone used Polyjuice Potion to assume your appearance. They then found Ms. Tonks and Mr. Potter in the library and proceeded to ask about the Chamber of Secrets. After some time, Mr. Potter was able to figure out that they were imposters. Mr. Potter and Ms. Tonks drew their wands on the imposters; however, the culprits seemed prepared for that and smashed several dungbombs to give them cover as they fled from the library," Dumbledore explained.

"When my father finds out about this there will be hell to pay! I want whoever did this found and expelled!" Draco roared.

"We don't know who did it, unfortunately," Snape spat in annoyance.

"You don't know! You didn't catch them!" Draco shouted.

"Mr. Malfoy, you will keep your voice down. Polyjuice potion has no residual after-effects, so once the two hours have passed there is no way to discover who it was that assumed your identity," Snape said calmly.

"When are the two hours up?" Blaise asked.

"I believe it already has or will be very soon, I'm truly sorry, boys," Dumbledore said.

"Not as sorry as those Gryffindors are going to be, no one messes with a Malfoy!" Draco mumbled angrily under his breath.  
Gryffindor Tower

"Well, did it work?" Ron asked.

"Well..." Fred said.

"Sort of." George finished sadly.

"What do you mean?" Ron demanded.

"Well, the plan went off without a hitch. We checked out of the castle to go to Hogsmeade with Filch," George said.

"We then used the secret passageway to come back into the school," Fred continued.

"We followed Zabini and Malfoy and stunned them from behind when they went to use the loo..." George said.

"And we plucked their hair to complete the potion," they finished together.

"And did it not work? What happened?" Ron asked.

"Well, little brother, it seems..."

"...that Potter isn't..."

"...the person opening the Chamber." Again, the last line was spoken in unison.

"WHAT! How can he not be? I mean, he's a bloody parselmouth," Ron said exasperatedly.

"It's not him," Fred said.

"Not that he cares who is opening it..." George said.

"Now that everyone knows it's not him," Fred added on.

"Just great, did you find out anything useful?" Ron asked.

"Well, sadly it seems..."

"...that Gin-Gin..."

"...is becoming a lot..."

"...like Malfoy and Potter," they chorused sadly.

"What do you mean?" Ron asked in shock.

"She used the M-word..." Fred said.

"...to describe muggleborns," George finished.

"No. She wouldn't do that! Mum would scourgify her mouth," Ron said.

"Yep, without..."

"...a doubt."

"So did you find out anything else?" Ron asked.

"Yeah, that we can't..."

"...pretend to be Malfoy and Zabini."

"What do you mean? And stop that twin speak thing, it's annoying," Ron said.

"What we mean, little brother, is that Potter figured us out," Fred said.

"He pulled his wand on us and everything. Had we not had some dungbombs handy, we would have been caught," George said.

"So what did you two do after you dropped the dungbombs?" Ron asked.

"We ran like hell back to the secret passageway to Hogsmeade," Fred said.

"By the time we got back into town, the potion had worn off, and we just checked in with Filch and returned to the castle like everything was normal," George said.

"And now we're giving you our dramatic report, little brother," Fred said.

"So we're back to square one, now. If Potter isn't opening the Chamber, who is?" Ron asked.

The story of Draco and Blaise being attacked and Polyjuice-cloned spread like wildfire throughout the school. Three weeks after the incident, Draco and the Slytherins were still out for blood. While most of the Slytherins preferred subtle attacks against the Gryffindors to get revenge, Draco would openly hex anybody he thought looked at him oddly.

The tension reached its height during a History of Magic class when Zacharais Smith made a comment about the attackers being punished enough for having to drink a vial filled with Draco's hair.

As soon as Smith finished his sentence, Draco snapped off six hexes, which hospitalized Smith for a week. When Snape and Sprout came to find out what happened, the Hufflepuffs blamed Draco; however, every Slytherin swore Draco was sleeping through the lecture. The only person who could prove that it was Draco was Binns, and he hadn't noticed the incident until Susan Bones asked to take Smith to the hospital wing.

Draco also was right about Mr. Malfoy being enraged when he found out about his son being ambushed and mimicked with Polyjuice. As soon as Mr. Malfoy heard what happened, he attempted to prove that Dumbledore was unable to protect the students of Hogwarts. The vote to have Dumbledore temporarily removed as headmaster fell just two shy of passing; however, everyone agreed that another attack would seal Dumbledore's fate.

Another problem for Dumbledore arose after the board meeting, though. Because Hogwarts board meetings were a matter of public record, when Lucius brought up the petrifications to discredit Dumbledore, the press found out about the opening of the Chamber of Secrets. This led to two weeks straight of headlines about how Hogwarts was unsafe in the Daily Prophet.

Harry was initially vilified by the press as the evil heir of Slytherin; however, after the prophet received hundreds of testimonials from the Hogwarts staff, most of Ravenclaw house, and several powerful and influential individuals, they stopped slandering him.

Apparently, Harry had Flitwick to thank for pressuring the prophet to stop printing lies about him. Flitwick had sent out hundreds of letters to influential Ravenclaw alumni and had his students write testimonials speaking out against the Prophet's false statements. Flitwick convinced his house to write the testimonials by pointing out that Harry could not have caused the last attack while he was at the game, sitting in the Ravenclaw stands.

Flitwick also gave a heartfelt speech to his students, during which he pointed out that with everyone so focused on blaming Harry, the real attacker was getting away. It seemed that Clearwater was a rather popular Ravenclaw, and the Ravenclaw House wanted to find out

who attacked her. So in order to flush out the real attacker, they agreed to write letters to the Prophet exonerating Harry of the crime.

With his name cleared of any wrong doing, Harry was now the only person in the entire school who couldn't care less about the Chamber of Secrets. Harry was in such high spirits for the first time that year that he decided he didn't want anything else to bother him. With that in mind, he decided to put off categorizing his memories of the Dursleys until the summer when he could be as angry as he wanted and only bother his relatives.

Harry also decided that his limited success at the Animagus transformation was not enough of a benefit to deal with the annoying gargoyle persona affecting his thoughts. Choosing to focus on the Animagus transformation over the summer, as well, Harry sealed the gargoyle persona behind his strongest Occlumency barriers. The gargoyle didn't go quietly, though, and the fight to lock the gargoyle personality behind his strongest Occlumency walls gave Harry a headache for a week; however, the gargoyle was no longer affecting his thoughts and sending him images.

Without the gargoyle affecting his personality, a school full of people no longer scared of him, and not reliving the worst moments of his life all the time, Harry quickly became the most content person in the school.

Truthfully, Harry might even have been the only person who was content and happy. Even Blaise, Tonks, and Ginny were on edge. Draco and Blaise were constantly on guard after the attack on them and consequent use of their hair in Polyjuice, while Tonks seemed to become a nervous wreck. When Harry tapped her on the shoulder in the library, she jumped and drew her wand. After that incident, Harry forced her to talk about what was bothering her.

::Flashback::

"Alright Tonks, enough is enough. What's wrong?" Harry asked as Tonks withdrew her wand from his face.

"It's nothing, Harry, just nerves," Tonks replied.

"No, Tonks, you've been jumpy all week - what's going on?" Harry pressed.

Tonks mumbled something, of which the only part Harry understood was the phrase "the Chamber of Secrets."

"What?" Harry asked.

"Harry, I'm not you, Draco, Blaise, and Ginny. I'm not a pureblood and I'm not a Slytherin as much as I pretend to be," Tonks hissed.

Harry was stunned. "First, Tonks, you aren't pretending to be anything. You're being yourself and that's Slytherin. Also, the monster has only attacked muggleborns..." Harry said.

"That's not true; Nearly Headless Nick was a pureblood when he was alive, and Clearwater is a halfblood," Tonks said. "Well, still don't worry about it, Tonks. If you want, I'll get Ginny to lend you a pair of her Slytherin robes, and Draco and I will stun one of her dorm mates so you can take their place," Harry said, earning a laugh from Tonks.

"If there's another attack, I'll hold you to that," Tonks muttered as she gave Harry a hug.

::End Flashback::

Ginny, though, seemed to have the worst of it. Even though everyone stopped looking at Harry as the person opening the chamber, it didn't stop her family from harassing her.

Ron for some reason or other thought that everyone in Slytherin knew who was behind the attacks, and would pester her to tell him who it was. Percy refused to even look at his little sister and when he did everyone could see the contempt he had for her. It seemed that the attack on Clearwater had permanently set him against the Slytherins.

Something strange was up with the twins, though. In an attempt to "brighten the spirits of the school," the twins engaged in a full blown prank assault against the Slytherins. While Draco, Blaise, and Harry

were the biggest targets of the pranks, Ginny had been spared of every single prank.

This had come as a massive surprise to Harry, Draco, Blaise, and Tonks. Usually, whenever the twins pranked the Slytherins, Ginny was amongst those hit the hardest. Now, though, the twins were clearly choosing not to prank their little sister. To add to the mystery, Ron suddenly stopped referring to her as “Slytherin” one day, and actually started to speak civilly with her.

::Flashback::

Harry, Ginny, and Draco were in the library. Harry was reading another book on gargoyles while Draco helped Ginny with a Potions essay. Ginny had just completed her essay when Ron came striding over.

“Ginny, can I talk to you?” Ron asked as he eyed Harry and Draco with disgust.

“So I’m Ginny again? What happened to ‘hey you’ or ‘Slytherin’?” Ginny asked, not looking up from her essay.

Ron colored slightly. “I’m sorry about that, Ginny,” Ron said simply.

“Really?” Ginny drawled disbelievingly.

“Yeah Ginny, I’m sorry. I was a prat. Now can I please talk to you?” Ron asked again.

“What can’t you say in front of us, Weasley?” Draco asked.

“This has nothing to do with you, Malfoy. So keep your trap shut before I close it for you,” Ron barked.

“Those are big words from someone who is outnumbered and incompetent,” Harry commented, not bothering to look up from his book.

"What are you reading there, Potter? Gargoyles? Looking for another monster to set upon the school? I guess Slytherin's beast just isn't enough for you," Ron said menacingly.

"Is there something you wanted, brother?" Ginny said icily.

"Yes, to talk to you alone," Ron said sharply.

"Fine. I'll be right back, guys," Ginny said as she put up her Potions essay and followed Ron towards the little used library section on Advanced Arithmetic Theory.

"Want to follow them?" Draco asked.

"Definitely," Harry said.

The two Slytherins quickly got up and entered the section next to the one Ginny and Ron were using. Pushing aside some dusty tomes, Harry and Draco were able to listen in on the conversation.

"Ginny, I'm sorry for this year. I was a prat towards you," Ron said.

"Yeah, you and everyone else in the family except for mum and Bill," Ginny hissed.

"Well, I can't apologize for them, but I'm sorry," Ron said.

"Why?" Ginny asked.

"What do you mean why? I just am," Ron said.

"No, Ron, that doesn't make any sense. A few days ago you refused to even call me by my name and the twins treated me like dirt. Now the twins aren't pranking me, and you're apologizing. So I'll ask again, why are you sorry?" Ginny said.

"Merlin, Ginny! Can't you just accept that I realized I was being a prat? Just because you're a snake doesn't mean we aren't family," Ron said.

"Says the person who told me over Christmas that I wasn't family. You never did send me a gift, Ron," Ginny spat.

"I'm sorry about that, Ginny," Ron said as he started to get annoyed.

"I'm sure," Ginny drawled disbelievingly.

"Merlin, Ginny, look at yourself! You never used to be so condescending or unforgiving. Those bloody snakes have turned you into someone else!" Ron practically shouted.

"No, they didn't. I was always Slytherin, Ron. Did you know that when I was six, I started to break into the broom shed to fly Bill and Charlie's brooms? I don't think you did. Mum even sent me a note wishing me luck before my first flying lesson. Also, did you know I was responsible for turning your hair different colors three summers ago, as well a bunch of other pranks that I convinced mum the twins were responsible for? I don't think so, Ron, no one ever suspected me. I was too cunning to be caught. So, Ron, you might have to ask yourself if you ever knew the real me, or if you just saw what you wanted to see!" Ginny barked.

After Ginny's rant, Harry and Draco looked at each other. They each shared a similar thought. Maybe we didn't turn Ginny into a Slytherin, maybe she already was one. The sound of a growling Ron quickly snapped them out of their thoughts, though.

"That was you! I should have known, the twins never would have turned my hair pink and purple or made butterflies follow me around all day! I guess I never really knew you at all, Ginny. You know what though, I'm glad. I don't want to know anyone who could ever call a muggleborn a mudblood like you have!" Ron spat.

Ginny's eyes widened. "H-h-how do you know I called someone a mudblood?" she asked.

Ron's face lost all color when he realized what he had given away. He was about to leave and think up an excuse when he felt two wands pressed against the back of his head.

"Yeah, I'd like to know how he knew that, too," Draco said darkly.

"I-I-I...what I mean to say is that I..." Ron said as his mind raced for an answer.

"Who polyjuiced into Draco and Blaise, Weasley?" Harry demanded coldly. Harry could feel the gargoyle's desire for him to hurt the youngest male Weasley from behind his Occlumency barrier.

"I-I don't know," Ron said weakly.

"You're lying!" Harry hissed dangerously.

"I'm not!" Ron said quickly.

"I say we hex him till he answers us," Draco growled.

"How do we know it wasn't him?" Ginny asked menacingly.

"Simple, Ginny: your brother is terrible at Potions. There is no way he managed to make a Newt level potion without killing himself," Harry said.

"I don't know who polyjuiced into Draco, I-I heard a Hufflepuff first year mention it," Ron said when he finally remembered what the twins had told him about the other time Ginny had said mudblood.

"He is lying," Draco said pressing his wand deeper into the back of Ron's head.

"Mr. Malfoy, Mr. Potter, what are you doing!" Madam Pince demanded as she strode over.

"My brother was threatening me, Madam Pince. I told him I didn't know who the heir of Slytherin was, but he didn't believe me. He was about to curse me, but Draco and Harry saw him drag me over here and stopped him," Ginny said with a straight face.

"Mr. Weasley, 40 points from Gryffindor. I'll be speaking to your head of house about this, now get out of my library! Mr. Potter, Mr. Malfoy, lower your wands," Madam Pince said.

"But ma'am, that's not true. I didn't..." Ron said.

"Come on, Ginny, let's get you away from him," Draco said as he and Harry pushed Ron aside so Ginny could walk past him. As Harry walked past Weasley, he locked eyes with the Gryffindor red head. It was at that moment that Harry decided to learn Legilimency immediately after he mastered Occlumency.

::End Flashback::

After the confrontation in the Library, the twins started to prank Ginny again, although what was done to her was minimal compared to what the twins' reign of terror was doing to Tonks.

Following the attack against Clearwater, Gryffindor house began to push for the immediate expulsion of all the Slytherins. It seemed that the geniuses in Gryffindor house thought that no Slytherins meant no Slytherin monster. After Tonks refused to fall in line with the rest of her house, she was considered a 'traitor to Gryffindor.' After someone hexed her pillow to bite her, Tonks wasn't even able to sleep in her own dorm room for fear of being hexed in her sleep.

In order to stop the random attacks that the Gryffindors were using against their friend, either Harry, Draco, or Blaise was always with her when she was in the library, and Tonks began sleeping in the Slytherin first year dorm while one of Ginny's roommates recovered from Dragon Pox in the hospital wing.

Saturday March 6th, Great Hall, Hogwarts

"Good morning," Harry said pleasantly as he sat down at the Slytherin table.

"Morning," Tonks grumbled.

"I don't see what's so great about it," Ginny remarked.

"You know, you guys need to relax. How about we all play some Quidditch later?" Harry asked.

"Don't you pay attention to the bulletin board in the common room, Harry?" Draco said sarcastically.

"No, I don't," Harry said without hesitating.

"Well, students aren't allowed to travel the grounds without a member of the staff present," Blaise said.

"Really? Are there any other rules I should know about?" Harry asked curiously.

"Do you want the list of rules I know you've broken in the last week?" Blaise asked rolling his eyes.

"Sure," Harry said brightly.

"Okay, students aren't allowed to wander the halls after dinner without having a prefect present," Blaise started.

"That's stupid. What if I need a library book?" Harry commented offhandedly.

"You are supposed to contact a prefect and have them escort you," Tonks said.

"Nope, not happening, I don't need a baby sitter," Harry said.

"Merlin, Harry, aren't you nervous at all about Slytherin's monster?" Tonks asked.

"Or the twins' pranking!" Ginny said.

"Or the fact that Blaise and I were attacked!" Draco barked.

"Well, I could really care less about Slytherin's monster. It's not like it's attacking anyone I care about. As for the twins' pranking, I will get even with them someday," Harry said offhandedly.

"And Draco and I being attacked?" Blaise asked sharply.

"I think that whoever attacked you thought I was the heir of Slytherin. When they realized I wasn't and that I had figured them out, they panicked. I seriously doubt they will try it again, especially with the two of you constantly walking around with your wands out ready to hex anything that moves," Harry said.

"You could at least show some concern though, Harry. Do you realize how many people hate you right now?" Tonks asked.

"No, and I don't really care, Tonks. Most of them have hated me all year. As long as the school doesn't close down, why should I care? All these petrifications are just scaring the muggleborns. Maybe less will come back next year. Hell, maybe Granger will be next," Harry said happily.

"Harry, that's a horrible thing to say!" Tonks snapped.

"Tonks, Granger and you don't even speak anymore. Why do you care if I insult her? Just look at her, she's all pale and looks like death! Come on, she has to be sniffing potions or something," Harry said, gesturing towards the Gryffindor table where Hermione was sitting by herself.

Tonks had no response to Harry's accusation. Hermione had definitely changed this year, and not for the better. Her bushy brown hair was constantly disheveled, her eyes had bags under them, her skin was pale, and she looked like she hadn't slept in days.

Over the course of the year, Hermione had become a massive recluse. She had always been an outcast in Gryffindor, but now she was practically a hermit. She only came out of her room for meals, class, and the occasional trip to the library. Tonks had even overheard Professor McGonagall and Sprout talking about how her marks had gradually started to slip. The once top student was now struggling to maintain an 'E' average in all her classes.

"Just because she's going through a hard time doesn't mean you can be cruel to her," Tonks said.

"Come on, Tonks, you tried to be her friend, but clearly she doesn't want to be yours. Just let her go and move on," Draco said.

"I agree, Tonks. She's weird," Ginny said.

"She's just having problems, and she doesn't have anyone to talk to," Tonks put forth.

"Yeah, well, it's hard to have someone to talk to when you push everyone away. You did nothing wrong, Tonks. This is all Granger's fault. If she wanted to be your friend, she wouldn't have ignored you all year. Hell, she didn't even send you a Christmas present," Harry said, pressing his advantage.

Tonks sighed heavily, knowing that Harry was right. "Well, I'm still her friend if she needs me," she said.

"So Tonks, who do you think the heir of Slytherin might be?" Blaise asked, obviously trying to stop another argument between Harry, Ginny, Draco and Tonks about Granger.

"I have no idea. Most of Gryffindor still think it's Harry or Draco," Tonks said.

Harry chuckled. "Idiots," he said.

"Well you're not helping yourself by acting like the happiest person in the world," Tonks pointed out.

"Draco, isn't that your father?" Ginny said, interrupting the forthcoming argument and pointing to the head table.

Draco, Harry, Tonks, and Blaise all turned their heads. Sure enough, Mr. Malfoy was speaking quietly to Dumbledore, with the Minister of Magic standing behind him. When Mr. Malfoy finished speaking, a flash of anger crossed Dumbledore's face. Harry gasped as the air in the Great Hall seemed to be supercharged with crackling magic

before Dumbledore regained his composure. Dumbledore quickly stood up and exited the hall through a side door. Mr. Malfoy, the Minister, and the large entourage that accompanied the Minister followed Dumbledore at a distance.

"Wow, I don't think I've ever seen Dumbledore that mad," Tonks said.

"Yeah, I know. Did you feel that?" Harry said in awe.

"Feel what?" Ginny asked.

"The magic," Harry said.

"What are you talking about, Harry?" Draco asked.

"When Dumbledore was upset, the entire hall filled with...well, I guess magic would be the best way to describe it," Harry said.

"I didn't feel anything," Blaise said.

"Yeah, me neither," Draco replied.

"Was it sort of like a warm tingly feeling all over your body?" Tonks asked.

"A tingle? It was more like standing next to a bolt of lightening," Harry said.

Draco, Ginny, Tonks, and Blaise looked at Harry curiously for a moment.

"Well, I didn't feel anything like that. I wonder what father said that got Dumbledore so upset, though?" Draco asked.

"I don't know. You want to follow them?" Harry asked.

"No, if father wanted me to know why he was here, he would have told me," Draco said simply.

"Come on, Draco. It might have been a spur of the moment thing," Harry said.

"I'll come. I want to know what could get Dumbledore that mad," Tonks said.

"Blaise, Ginny, what about you two?" Harry asked.

"I can't. I've got a tutoring appointment." Blaise stood up.

"I wish I could, but I really need to work on my transfiguration essay," Ginny said.

"Okay, well, looks like it's just you and me, Tonks," Harry said as he and Tonks got up and left the Great Hall.

"How are we going to follow them? We don't even know where they went," Tonks asked.

Harry quickly pulled Tonks into an unused classroom. "Well, to answer your first question, I've got my invisibility cloak in my bag. Besides, a group that size can't exactly go someplace without being seen easily," Harry said as he withdrew his invisibility cloak.

Harry and Tonks left the classroom and walked as quickly as they could under the cloak. After ten minutes, though, they still hadn't been able to locate the large ministry group. Harry took off the cloak and shrugged his shoulders. "I have no idea where they could be," he admitted.

Tonks nodded her head before an idea came to her. She quickly sprinted to the nearest window and gasped. "There they are!" she said.

Harry walked over to the window and saw the Minister, Lucius, Dumbledore, and Professor McGonagall leading a large group of Aurors towards Hagrid's hut. "I wonder what they want with that fat oaf?" Harry asked, earning himself a smack to the head from Tonks. Harry covered the two of them with the invisibility cloak again, and Tonks quickly pulled Harry down a flight of stairs and out of the castle.

Harry and Tonks made it to Hagrid's hut just in time to see the large gamekeeper being escorted out by several Aurors at wand point. Never in Harry's life had he ever seen the man looking so terrified. Apparently, Tonks hadn't either because in a moment of Gryffindor stupidity she ran out from under the invisibility cloak and said, "Hagrid, are you okay?"

Tonks' sudden appearance spooked the Aurors, who fired five stunners at her. Harry's eyes widened when he saw the five red lights shoot out at his best friend.

Harry grabbed Tonks around the waste and shouted, "Protego!"

The shield blocked the first two stunners; however, the third stunner brought down the shield, causing Harry and Tonks to dive out of the way to avoid the last two.

"STOP, THEY'RE STUDENTS!" Dumbledore roared.

"What are students doing out here, Dumbledore?" Fudge raged.

"I believe we should ask Mr. Potter about that, Minister," Lucius said simply.

The minister instantly tore his eyes away from Dumbledore and looked over to where Harry was picking himself up off the ground. "My stars, Harry Potter, I'm terribly sorry about that, young man, but...wait, how did you get here without us seeing you?" Fudge asked.

"Mr. Potter owns an invisibility cloak, Minister. While technically having one at school is frowned upon, the rarity of the items have allowed them to remain off Hogwarts' banned items list," Dumbledore said.

"Ah, that would explain how Harry and...what was your name again, dear?" Fudge asked.

"Tonks," Tonks replied.

"Tonks? An unusual first name if I might say so," Fudge said with a well practiced politician's smile.

"Minister, this is Andromeda Tonks' daughter. She goes by her surname because she disapproves of Andromeda's choice for her first name," Lucius said evenly.

"Oh yes, yes, yes your mother is an excellent spell crafter, Ms. Tonks. I perish to think what would happen if she ever decided to go into the private sector and leave the ministry," Fudge said.

"Sir, what's going on? Where are the Aurors taking Hagrid?" Tonks asked.

"Ah yes, well, I'm sure you are aware of the...disturbances at the school," Fudge said.

Tonks and Harry nodded their heads.

"Yes, well, we have reason to believe that Mr. Hagrid is responsible. He is being taken to Azkaban for the time being," Fudge said.

"No!" Tonks shouted as Harry barked out a laugh.

"I fail to see what's amusing, Mr. Potter!" McGonagall demanded.

Harry instantly stopped laughing. "I'm sorry, ma'am. I wasn't laughing at Hagrid going to Azkaban. It's just too absurd to believe that Hagrid is responsible. I mean he's not exactly what I think of when I hear the term 'The heir of Slytherin'," Harry said quickly.

McGonagall's eyes narrowed dangerously. "You should still be respectful, Mr. Potter. This is a very sensitive matter, and laughing is not appropriate. To even find such a situation amusing..."

While Harry was busy getting lectured by McGonagall, Tonks ran over and hugged Hagrid.

"I know you aren't responsible for this, Hagrid. I'm sorry I didn't visit you more this year. I'm so sorry. You don't deserve to go to Azkaban," Tonks cried.

"Easy, lass, I'm a tough bloke. I'll be okay. I'll need someone to feed Fang for me, though. Can you do that?" Hagrid asked.

"Of course," Tonks said weakly.

"Miss, please step away from the prisoner," an Auror said.

Tonks hesitantly took a step back with unshed tears in her eyes. "Please, don't do this. He isn't responsible," Tonks pleaded.

"Do you know who is?" the head Auror asked.

"No," Tonks said.

"Well, then I'm sorry, Miss."

"Come on, Tonks, there isn't anything we can do," Harry said as he put a hand on her shoulder.

"No, uncle Lucius, you can stop this, please," Tonks pleaded.

Lucius hid his shock at being called uncle in front of the Minister, Dumbledore, McGonagall, and several Aurors. "I'm sorry, dear, but I can not stop this," he said.

"Dumbledore, we really need to be moving the prisoner if we want to catch the morning ferry to Azkaban," Fudge said after he checked his watch.

"Very well, Cornelius. Hagrid, I will not rest until you are freed, my friend. Minerva, could you escort Mr. Potter and Ms. Tonks back to the castle?" Dumbledore said.

McGonagall simply nodded. She was still surprised that Nymphadora knew that Lucius was her uncle.

“Good luck, Hagrid,” Tonks said as Hagrid, Dumbledore, Lucius, the Minister and the Aurors vanished by portkey.

The walk up to the castle was done in silence. Minerva and Tonks were lost in their own thoughts while Harry simply wanted to avoid angering either of them. As soon as they reached the entrance hall, McGonagall left to go to her first class and Tonks turned to face Harry. “Harry, will you please help me find out who the heir of Slytherin is? Hagrid doesn’t deserve to be in Azkaban.”

NO! Harry felt the gargoyle screeching from behind his Occlumency walls. Looking up at Tonks, he saw the desperation and pleading in her eyes. Harry felt himself fighting his urge to tell Tonks that Hagrid deserved Azkaban for taking him to the Dursleys. Grimacing, Harry reluctantly said, “Yes, Tonks I’ll help you. Let’s go to the library.”

A/Ns

First let me say how truly sorry I am about the long wait between updates for this story. Keeping my GPA up has taken precedent over writing.

Secondly, several people have asked me if I would consider creating a Yahoo group. I have been told that a Yahoo group would make it easier to communicate with readers and answer questions about my fic. Unfortunately, there are two problems with setting up a yahoo group. 1). I don’t have a lot of time on my hands and 2). I’m not particularly technology savvy. So if being apart of a yahoo group is something you would be interested in, please let me know as I would have to find someone to help me and take time away from the maddening world of college research papers to create it.

Finally, if you are looking for a good story to read while waiting for my updates, read these two fics:

Harry Potter: Knowledge is Power by SerpentSannin

Harry Potter and the Unlocked Knowledge by kmfrank

## Chapter 25

### Unforgivable

The month following Hagrid's departure to Azkaban was a period of general relief for the student population. The Daily Prophet ran a series of stories blaming the eccentric gamekeeper for the recent attacks, and most students were willing to believe it. The most damaging of these articles was a piece done by Rita Skeeter, which revealed that Hagrid was originally expelled in his third year for releasing a dangerous creature that eventually killed another student.

While there were a few students in Ravenclaw, Gryffindor, and Hufflepuff who would defend Hagrid, the most vocal supporters of his innocence were actually the Slytherins. Not that any Slytherin particularly cared about Hagrid rotting away in Azkaban; however, they did take the insinuation that a drunk oaf like Hagrid had a blood tie to the great Salazar Slytherin as a personal insult. A majority of the students, however, rejoiced at having the heir of Slytherin in Azkaban.

Harry though was not able to enjoy the month of March. Tonks had begun to monopolize every moment of his spare time. They would spend every waking moment in the library to either try to find out who the Heir of Slytherin was or where the Chamber of Secrets might be located. In order to accomplish this seemingly impossible task, Harry had raided the restricted section for the official school schematics, which Tonks had overheard Percy Weasley bragging about seeing once in the Gryffindor common room. Finding the rare book was a task unto itself and it took Harry nearly a week of opening random books in the restricted section till he found it.

After having turned over the book to Tonks, Harry had hoped he could relax; however, that was not to be. It turned out that Hogwarts was actually a lot bigger than it appeared. Several unused floors were hidden with concealing wards and notice-me-not charms. The rotating stairways also didn't connect to the unused floors when they weren't in use, so students never even thought of trying to find them. Unfortunately for Harry, since there seemed to be no way for a student to access these unused floors, he was 'volunteered' by Tonks

to search them by shifting into the shadow realm, thus bypassing the notice-me-not charms and other wards placed to hide the floors.

This turned out to be exhausting and unrewarding for Harry. Practically every night for the last two weeks of March, Harry would slip out of the Slytherin common room after curfew, shift into his shadow form, go to an unused floor or corridor, search it, and if he found any sort of secret passage, he had to return to his normal form and see if it was accessible outside of the shadow realm. After three weeks of searching, Harry had uncovered over ten secret passages, another way into the kitchen, and a stairway that went directly from the eighth floor to the dungeons, but nothing remotely to do with the Chamber of Secrets.

Searching the castle for over a fortnight was a very tiresome job, and Harry was getting very little sleep at night. Not that he could complain to Tonks. If he, Draco, Blaise, or Ginny made any sort of comment about how stupid the search for the chamber was, Tonks would hex them instantly. Draco found that out the hard way when Tonks caused several boils to appear on a rather sensitive part of his anatomy.

Tuesday April 6th, Great Hall, Hogwarts

Harry sat down at the Slytherin table completely exhausted. He had spent most of the night searching the Divination tower and the unused ninth floor Charms wing. After two and a half hours of searching, he had found absolutely nothing.

"You look terrible," Draco commented.

"Thanks. Andi!" Harry snapped.

There was a small pop and Andi appeared at his side. "Yes, master Harry Potter, sir?" Andi asked.

"Coffee," Harry demanded.

"Coffee? Master Harry should not drink coffee at such a young age, it will stunt his growth," Andi chided.

"Well, I'm tired and I need to wake up. So do you have anything better?" Harry asked, slightly annoyed that his elf was talking back to him.

"Andi does, sir," Andi said as she popped away only to reappear a moment later with an orange potion.

Harry immediately recognized the Potion as a pepper up Potion. Pinching his nose to distract him from the foul smell, he quickly downed it in one gulp. "Thank you," he said, immediately feeling better.

"You is welcome, master Harry. Do you need anything else?" Andi asked.

"No,"

Andi nodded and disappeared.

"I'm brining Trixie with me next year. Having a personal elf at your beck and call at Hogwarts is damn useful. I bet she nicked that potion from Pomfrey or uncle Severus and didn't think twice about it," Draco said enviously.

"I doubt your mum would let you take Trixie, Draco," Harry paused for a moment and a smile slowly spread across his face, "Your father might be willing to part with Dobby, though."

Draco wrinkled his nose in disgust before saying, "I would never bring that pathetic elf with me. I honestly don't know why father just doesn't sell or kill it."

"Kill what?" Ginny asked arriving at the table with Blaise.

"A pathetic house elf that the Malfoys own, named Dobby," Harry said, enjoying the angry look Draco sent him for revealing that the Malfoys had anything but perfect servants.

"I wish we had a house elf. Mum makes me do all the cleaning with Ron and the twins," Ginny said.

Draco and Harry shuddered at the thought.

"So Harry, how goes the Chamber hunt?" Blaise asked with a knowing smirk.

Harry just growled in response.

"That bad, huh? You know, you really should tell Tonks to give you a break," Blaise put forth.

The gargoyle roared its agreement from behind the Occlumency walls and Harry took a moment to make sure his mind shield was well enforced before saying, "I'm sure that would go over great, Blaise."

"She's not really being sensible about all this, Harry. I'll talk to her if you want me to," Ginny said diplomatically.

"No, I'll talk to her at lunch. Merlin knows I can't keep going like this. Did you know I actually got a few questions wrong on the last Charms test? I mastered animation at the beginning of the year. Flitwick interrogated me for over twenty minutes last night during my lesson. He thinks I've been sniffing potions or something!" Harry said exasperatedly.

Draco, Ginny, and Blaise did their best to stifle their laughter, but they all failed miserably. Draco was the first to regain his composure, and seeing the glare Harry was sending him, decided to redirect the conversation back to Tonks. "Well, I think Tonks is being unreasonable. If she would just accept that Hagrid is a homicidal maniac, then we could all move on."

The utter silence that met his statement and the shifting of three sets of eyes to behind his back caused Draco to squirm nervously before turning around. Sure enough, standing not one foot behind him was a very angry Nymphadora Tonks with her wand pointed at his head.

"Tonks, how are you this morning? Blaise and I were just talking about-"

"Furnunculus" Tonks hissed.

The crimson-colored spell struck Draco right between the eyes. A moment later he was howling in pain as boils began to appear all over his face. Getting up as quickly as he could, he raced out of the Great Hall heading for the hospital wing.

"Was that really necessary?" Ginny asked after managing to control her laughter.

"Yes," Tonks growled.

"Nymphadora Tonks, Mr. Potter, gather your things and come with me!" a sharp voice demanded.

Harry and Tonks looked up and saw a rather angry Professor McGonagall striding towards them.

"What did I do?" Harry mumbled as he stood up and followed McGonagall out of the Great Hall with Tonks.

McGonagall led them into an unused classroom and closed the door.

"Take a seat," McGonagall said, gesturing to two chairs. "Do either of you two know why I asked you to come here today?"

"I'm sorry I hexed Draco," Tonks said, not sounding sorry at all.

"No," Harry grumbled.

"First, Ms. Tonks, I did not ask you here for hexing Mr. Malfoy. By the way, you will have detention tonight with Professor Snape at 7 o'clock," McGonagall said shortly.

"So if it wasn't for hexing Draco why am I here?" Tonks asked.

"And why am I here?" Harry asked.

"I'll be blunt; over the last month, both of your grades have begun to drop. Ms. Tonks, yours more seriously than Mr. Potter's. I have tried to understand why this happened, and I recently figured it out," McGonagall said.

"Shouldn't I be discussing academic problems with my head of house?" Harry asked.

"Mr. Potter, you should hope that this does not reach your head of house!" McGonagall snapped before composing herself. "The headmaster also believed that I should discuss your actions with you in my capacity as Deputy Headmistress."

Realizing that he was in actual trouble, Harry waited silently for McGonagall to continue.

"Last night, I went to Headmaster Dumbledore's office to discuss your night time activities, Mr. Potter." Seeing Harry's eyes widen, McGonagall pressed on, "I can see you know what I am referring to. It wasn't all that difficult to figure out. Filius and Severus have reported seeing you and Ms. Tonks in the library constantly reading out of a large untitled brown book. I had my suspicions as to what that book was, but I was only certain last night. When I brought my suspicions about your night time explorations to the headmaster, I was informed that you have visited almost every sealed part of the castle. For reasons the headmaster has chosen to keep to himself, he did not seek to stop you." Seeing the disbelieving look on Harry's face McGonagall pressed on, "I, however, reminded him that students being out of bounds in an unknown section of the castle is completely unacceptable, especially in these dangerous times. So tell me, how long have you had the school's schematics? How did you get them from the restricted section? And how did you manage to bypass the wards on the concealed floors of this castle?!" McGonagall demanded, her voice rising with every question.

"Please, ma'am, this is my fault. I made Harry get the book, and asked him to search the floors for the Chamber of Secrets," Tonks apologized just as Harry blurted out, "How did he know?!"

McGonagall looked between the two students with a well-practiced glare. "Mr. Potter, the headmaster is immediately told if a student accesses a hidden part of the castle. Miss Tonks, while I do not doubt the truth behind your confession of guilt, Mr. Potter is responsible for his own actions. Also, how Mr. Potter got the book from the restricted section or how he accessed the hidden floors is very distressing to the few staff members who know about it," McGonagall said, clearly waiting for Harry to reveal how he accomplished it.

"I just grabbed it while Madam Pince was distracted," Harry said.

"Mr. Potter, what very few students know is that to take a book out of the restricted section, you need Madam Pince to cancel a ward that insures that students can not take a book from the restricted section without her knowing. Madam Pince did not cast the spell allowing you to take that book from the restricted section, and she had no knowledge of its disappearance, yet you did not set off the ward. So I'll ask you again, how did you get the book out of the restricted section?" McGonagall demanded.

Harry felt himself pale. He had no idea that there was a ward around the restricted section, but he mentally slapped himself when he thought about it. Of course there would be a ward, otherwise anyone could just sneak in and take out a book. "I-I don't know why the ward didn't activate, ma'am," Harry said.

McGonagall gave him one of her piercing stares before she nodded her head in acceptance. "Very well, Mr. Potter, I suppose you also don't know why you were able to access the hidden floors of the castle."

"No ma'am, I just assumed that since I knew the floors existed, I could access them," Harry quickly lied.

"While that is typically the case with a notice-me-not charm, the numerous concealment wards around the floors should have stopped you from being able to access them," McGonagall muttered just loud enough for Tonks and Harry to hear it.

"You have nothing else to add then, Mr. Potter?" McGonagall demanded after a moment.

After Harry shook his head in the negative, McGonagall said, "You will have detention for a week with Filius for being out of bounds and taking a book from the restricted section. For repeatedly violating curfew and visiting out-of-bounds sections of the school, an official reprimand will go into your student file. Do not let me catch you doing something like this again!"

"Yes ma'am," Harry said, disgusted by the fact that he was in trouble for doing something he didn't want to do in the first place.

"Ms. Tonks, you will also have detention for a week, and you will return the book to Madam Pince today. Do I make myself clear?" McGonagall said sharply.

"Yes Ma'am," Tonks muttered.

"Ms. Tonks, I will also tell you that the headmaster has already searched the school since the first attack, and he has yet to find the entrance to the chamber," McGonagall said sympathetically.

"Maybe he missed something, maybe he..."

"Miss Tonks!" McGonagall said sharply before softening her voice. "I know you want to help Hagrid, but you are not the only one. Believe me when I say that we are doing all that we can to help him. Now please stop looking for the chamber."

"Yes ma'am," Tonks said.

"Mr. Potter, do you understand? You are to stop these night time searches of the castle!" McGonagall commanded sternly.

"Yes ma'am," Harry said.

"Very well, you both are dismissed. I suggest you go directly to your first class," McGonagall said.

"Yes ma'am," Harry and Tonks replied in unison as they stood up and left.

As soon as they closed the door, Harry said, "I've got to get to Herbology, Tonks, I'll see you at lunch."

Tonks simply nodded and the two parted ways, each heading to their respective class.

Greenhouse 4, Hogwarts

Harry made it to Greenhouse 4 a few minutes before class started.

"Hey Harry, what did McGonagall want?" Draco asked as soon as Harry put his stuff down next to Neville.

"She found out about my late night explorations of the castle," Harry said, letting his anger out.

"Really? Are you in trouble?" Blaise asked, sounding more curious than concerned.

"I got a week's detention for taking a book out of the restricted section and an official reprimand for being out of bounds. Oh, that reminds me, don't ever try to take a book from the restricted section. You can read it in the section, but don't try to remove it," Harry said seriously.

"Why?" Draco asked .

"Because apparently there is a ward that Madam Pince has to cancel for a student to take the book from the section," Harry said.

"Wait, so how did you remove the school schematics? And what about that book of curses that you got from the restricted section earlier this semester?" Blaise asked curiously.

"I managed to avoid the ward both times," Harry replied evasively.

"How?" Blaise asked again.

"Blaise, drop it. Harry doesn't have to tell you that," Draco said shortly.

"I'm just curious, Draco. If Harry just found out about it today, he managed to either break the ward or avoid it on accident," Blaise replied.

"Blaise, please just drop it. Yes, I know how I avoided the ward, and yes, I could easily do it again, but I won't tell you how. Draco and Tonks know, but they are the only ones," Harry said.

"Fine, I'll drop it for now, but I do want to know," Blaise said seriously.

"Maybe someday I'll tell you," Harry said.

"Good enough, I guess," Blaise sighed as Sprout entered the room.

"If everyone could please take their seats. I have good news. Professor Dumbledore, Professor Snape, and myself have managed to find a way to help the people who have been petrified," Sprout announced.

"Really! How?" Lavender Brown quickly asked, ready to learn any new gossip.

"A potion created by Professors Dumbledore and Snape. They call it the Mandrake restorative draught. It has yet to be tested, but the theory behind it is solid. You, of course, remember how we cultivated the Mandrakes earlier this year. Professor Dumbledore and Professor Snape believe combining a Mandrake with a powerful pepper-up potion will cause those petrified to regain movement," Sprout said.

"When will the potion be administered?" Parvati Patil asked.

"Unfortunately, the potion will not be ready for some time. With some luck, we will be able to administer it before you are scheduled to leave for the summer holidays," Sprout said.

"Why so long? Why not just get Snape to hurry up and brew the bloody thing?" Ron asked.

"Mr. Weasley, five points from Gryffindor for not respecting a Hogwarts professor. - That is a good place to start out lesson, though. Can anyone tell me why we will have to wait so long to administer the potion?" Sprout asked.

Neville and Draco's hands both went up.

"Mr. Malfoy," Sprout said.

"Well, proper testing of the potion would have to be done prior to human consumption. It could be dangerous to just give an untested potion to someone. Not that I really care about those mudbloods," Draco said, adding the last part under his breath.

"Two points to Slytherin. That is very true; one should never test a potion on a human being. That is not the answer I'm looking for, though. Does anyone else know?" Sprout asked.

Seeing that Neville's hand was still raised, Sprout called on him.

"The Mandrake is a very difficult substance to add to a potion. It can only be broken down on a full moon and usually only in small quantities," Neville said.

"Ten points to Gryffindor, Mr. Longbottom. The potion calls for a large amount of Mandrake to be added. The amount is so large that it will take two or possibly three cycles of the moon before we are able to generate the amount necessary. Now, to help Professor Snape, you and your partner will be cultivating a Mandrake like we did earlier this year," Sprout said.

"Professor Sprout, Granger isn't here, can I be excused for this class?" Draco asked hopefully.

Sprout pursed her lips. "No, Mr. Malfoy, you will not be excused, work with Mr. Weasley and Mr. Nott," she instructed.

"No," Draco whined as Ron shouted, "NO!"

Sprout eyed the two boys with contempt. "Is there a problem with that arrangement?" she asked.

"Yes, it's bad enough I have to work with one slimy snake, but I will not work with Malfoy," Ron declared.

"And I refuse to work with someone who can't even afford the Dragon hide gloves for this class, it's a safety risk! Let me work with Harry and the Squi...I mean Longbottom," Draco said.

"Mr. Malfoy, Mr. Weasley, you both will serve detention tonight with me, and no, Mr. Malfoy, you will not work with Mr. Potter and Mr. Longbottom. You will work with Mr. Weasley and Mr. Nott like I instructed you to," Sprout said in a very rare showing of anger.

Draco muttered several insults under his breath before grabbing his stuff and taking a seat next to Nott.

An hour and a half later, a very annoyed Draco Malfoy left Herbology with Harry and Blaise in tow.

"I swear, that woman has it in for me," Draco grumbled as soon as they were out of earshot.

"Why do you say that?" Blaise asked.

"Granger and then Weasley, Blaise! A mudblood and a blood traitor! Why didn't she let me work with Harry and Longbottom?" Draco practically shouted.

"Well, to be fair, Draco, you did call him a squib," Harry put forth as they entered the Great Hall.

"So? Weasley's worse than a Squib if you ask me. And why didn't Sprout punish Granger for not showing up to class?" Draco said as he took a seat at the Slytherin table.

"I think that she forgot about it after you and Weasley started to insult each other," Blaise guessed.

"Could this day get any worse?" Draco asked.

"Yes," Harry and Blaise said together.

"How?" Draco asked in surprise.

"Have you forgotten who we have next? If anyone can make a day worse, it's Lockhart," Harry explained.

"How could I forget we had him next?" Draco groaned.

"I think we all wish we could forget about Lockhart," Blaise said.

"You got that right," Ginny agreed as she sat down.

Draco just grumbled a greeting and piled some vegetables on his plate.

"What's wrong with him?" Ginny asked Blaise.

"He was forced to work with your brother during Herbology when Granger didn't show up," Blaise said.

"I'm sorry, Draco. Did you at least get to curse him?" Ginny asked sympathetically.

"No. What's worse is I have detention tonight with Sprout," Draco said.

"With Weasley, remember? He also got detention," Harry said.

Draco pretended to hit his head against the table several times.

"What's wrong with him?" Tonks asked as she sat down next to Harry.

"Draco and Weasley have detention together for insulting each other in Herbology," Harry said.

"Bummer," Tonks said before lowering her voice and saying, "I wanted to tell you that I wrote down a few more places for us to search before I gave the book back."

"What?" Harry said in disbelief.

"Yeah, this way we can check out one or two more places before we give up," Tonks said, clearly not liking that they would have to eventually stop.

"Tonks, you're kidding me, right?" Harry asked while the gargoyle began growling.

"No, I'm not kidding you, Harry. We need to do everything we can to help Hagrid," Tonks said seriously.

"No, Tonks I'm sorry, but I'm done. I'm not searching another corridor at two in the morning. I'm tired, my grades are slipping, I've been given an official reprimand, and I just don't care enough about Hagrid to do this," Harry said firmly, causing the gargoyle in his mind and everyone sitting around him at the table to fall silent.

Tonks looked completely stunned. "Harry, he's innocent! There is an innocent man in Azkaban."

"Tonks, I've done everything you've asked me to this month. I didn't want to help at all, but I did because I knew it was important to you. I can't do it anymore, though. I'm sorry, I just don't care if he's in Azkaban," Harry said flatly.

A myriad of emotions seemed to flicker across Tonks' face, covering shock, horror, and disbelief, before settling on anger. "Fine, Harry. I don't need you to find the Chamber of Secrets. I'm sorry I put you out. Merlin forbid saving an innocent man from Azkaban puts you out a little, and don't even bring up your 'official reprimand', the twins probably have a dozen of those each and they've never even been suspended!" Tonks said coldly.

"Tonks, don't be like that! We tried, but we couldn't find it," Harry said.

"No Harry, I'm not giving up. I'm sorry I even asked you when I should have realized you never even wanted to help!" Tonks said angrily.

"Tonks, it's not Harry's fault, not even Dumbledore can find the Chamber," Ginny said, jumping to Harry's defense.

"Be quiet, Ginny, you don't know Harry like I do. If he really wanted to find the Chamber, he probably could have," Tonks said menacingly.

Ginny reeled back as if struck. She looked back and forth between Harry and Tonks, wondering what exactly Tonks meant.

"Tonks, I tried to find that bloody thing! I did! I couldn't. Everywhere you asked me to look, I did. I have barely slept in the last two weeks!" Harry snapped.

"Tonks, you know I normally never get involved in arguments, but Harry's telling the truth. Just look at him, he's exhausted," Blaise said.

"Whatever, Blaise. Since you've decided to stop helping me, Harry, can I at least borrow your invisibility cloak?" Tonks asked.

An urge to tell Tonks no came from the indignant gargoyle, but Harry shoved the feeling aside and icily said, "Knock yourself out, it's in my bag."

Tonks took the bag, quickly took out the cloak, and put it in her own bag. "Thanks," She grumbled as she stood up.

"Where are you going?" Ginny asked.

"I'm going to browse the restricted section before Runes," Tonks said.

"Can I come?" Ginny asked.

Tonks narrowed her eyes slightly. "Why?" She asked.

"Well, I've never been under an invisibility cloak," Ginny admitted.

Deciding that two heads were probably better than one, Tonks said, "Alright, let's go."

Harry, Draco, and Blaise watched as Ginny and Tonks quickly walked out of the Great Hall.

"Well, that could have gone better," Harry stated flatly.

"She'll calm down, Harry, she's just upset," Blaise said.

"I can't bloody believe she didn't curse you. You just told her that you didn't give a damn if that oaf stayed in prison and she only yelled at you! If that had been me, I'd have boils coming out of every part of my body! Must have been that time of the month earlier or something," Draco griped.

Harry and Blaise just rolled their eyes at Draco.

"You'd better hope we never tell her you said that, or it won't be your face she hexes," Harry said, a smile slowly working its way back onto his face.

"I do believe you're right, Harry. I wonder what Tonks would say if I let that piece of information slip," Blaise said curiously.

"You won't," Draco threatened.

"I suppose that she would be rather upset. She might even feel the need to hex your...more sensitive parts again," Blaise said with a smirk.

"Don't remind me of that," Draco muttered, "I thought I was going to die. I doubt the Cruciatus could be that bad!"

"For some reason, I think the torture curse would hurt more than boils, Draco," Blaise said simply.

"Torture curse?" Harry asked, raising an eyebrow.

"It's one of the Unforgivables." Seeing his friend's blank look, Draco tauntingly said, "You know what the Unforgivables are, don't you?"

"Tonks mentioned them when she was explaining Arithmancy, but she didn't talk about any but the killing curse," Harry admitted, now feeling a little foolish for not looking up the others.

"Alright, the next gift I give you is a book on Dark Magic," Draco said exasperatedly.

"Wouldn't that be illegal?" Harry asked with a raised eyebrow.

Now, it was Draco's turn to roll his eyes. "Not a book on how to cast it, stupid, just something that talks about it. I bet even Weasley knows what the Unforgivables are. Do you really want that wanker to know something you don't?"

"No. Now, if you'll stop making me feel like an idiot, please feel free to explain it to me," Harry demanded.

"Let's go to class. It should take a while to explain and it will give us something to do besides listening to Lockhart," Draco said.

"True. What do you have in that class, by the way?" Blaise asked as the three boys stood up and left the Great Hall.

"I'm barely scraping an Acceptable, but I'll probably end up with a Poor," Draco admitted.

"Yeah, me too. What about you, Harry?" Blaise asked.

"I've got a Poor, but I'll probably end up with a Dreadful. Lockhart hates me," Harry deadpanned.

"Yes, well, you do comment about him being a fraud in every class," Blaise said.

"So? It doesn't make it less true," Harry replied.

"Yes, but it's killing your grade," Draco pointed out.

"So what? It's not like anything he is teaching us will end up on our OWLs. I doubt the examiners will care how Gilderoy Lockhart

discovered a revolutionary new shield charm only to have his notes be set on fire by a rogue fire imp,” Harry said as they entered the defense classroom and took their normal seats in the back of the room.

”Okay, now spill about the Unforgivables and Dark Magic,” Harry demanded.

”Okay. Well, most people would say that Dark Magic is any spell that is used to harm, maim, torture, or control someone’s will. While a lot of Dark Magic does just that, many dark spells are considered dark because of the amount of power it takes to use them. A lot of rituals are considered dark by the ministry, but they do amazing things like enhance your eyesight, or boost your magical core,” Blaise said.

”Makes sense,” Harry said as Lockhart entered the room with the other students.

”I should tell you that for every spell or ritual that shouldn’t be considered dark there are at least twenty that deserve to be considered Dark Magic. These spells can literally tear someone apart from the inside out, explode organs, cut you into pieces, or rip off your skin slowly over hours. Dark rituals often require a sacrifice of some sort. The most powerful ones require human sacrifice,” Blaise said with a shudder.

”I-I see,” Harry said, both amazed and disgusted by the images Blaise was describing.

”The most well-known dark spells in Brittan are the Unforgivables. They are all unblockable...,” Draco said.

”Well they really aren’t technically unblockable. I mean, you could summon something in their way or conjure something to stop them, but no magical shield like Protego will stop them. They will just pass right through it,” Blaise interjected.

Harry just nodded his head, he already knew this.

"Yeah, they are really powerful. The three Unforgivables are the Cruciatus curse, the Imperius curse, and the Killing Curse," Draco said.

Wait, the what?!"The Imperius curse, what does that do?" Harry asked quickly.

Blaise and Draco shared a look before Blaise asked "Why do you want to know about that one?"

"Because Quirrell cast that on me last year," Harry admitted.

"Merlin, that's terrible!" Blaise whispered in horror.

"Yeah," Draco agreed.

"What does it do?" Harry asked again.

"Oh, sorry. It's like a mind control spell. The person who casts it can control the victim of their spell. You lose your ability to think for yourself, and are completely under the caster's control," Blaise said.

"R-really? It didn't feel like that to me. I mean...I guess I did do everything he told me to, but I didn't not want to do it. Does that make sense?" Harry asked.

"Yeah, that makes sense, Harry. The Imperius is the only Unforgivable that can be fought off. If you were given a command to do something you wouldn't mind, then you would have less resistance to doing whatever he told you to do," Blaise said.

"What do you mean?" Harry asked.

"Okay, let's say I put you under the Imperius and told you to kill your uncle. You would have less reason to fight that command than if I told you to kill Tonks," Draco muttered quietly.

"Why would Harry want to kill his uncle?" Blaise asked, proving that Draco had spoken a little too loudly.

"Yeah, Draco, why would I want to do that?" Harry hissed dangerously.

Draco paled when he realized what he had just given away. "I-I-It was just an example, Blaise. I mean, you know Harry hates muggles, so he would probably hate his muggle uncle more than he hates Tonks."

"Riiiiight. Draco, you might be the worst liar in Slytherin," Blaise said.

"Blaise..." Harry threatened.

"I'll drop it, Harry. Let's just move on to the Cruciatus," Blaise said, mentally storing that bit of information for another time.

"Alright, thanks. You said the Cruciatus was a torture curse?" Harry asked.

"Yeah, and a really nasty one at that. It can drive you insane if you're placed under it for too long," Draco said.

"How does it torture you?" Harry asked.

"I overheard father saying that it feels as though burning knives were being dragged across your body while you're being stabbed all over," Draco said with a shudder.

Blaise just looked at Draco for a long moment before saying, "The last curse is the Killing Curse or the Avada Kedavra," he said.

"I've used that before," Harry said before he could stop himself.

Draco and Blaise's eyes widened in surprise.

"Y-You used the Killing Curse?! When?" Draco said quietly.

"I -err, well, it was while I was under the Imperius curse. Quirrell had me use it against Dumbledore," Harry said, mentally slapping himself for talking about this in a classroom where anyone could overhear him.

"Wow," Draco said in awe.

"Were you... um, were you able to cast it successfully?" Blaise asked.

"Dumbledore had to dodge it," Harry divulged.

"Merlin, I can't believe that you were able to cast it," Blaise said quietly.

"Why?" Harry asked.

"Err... well, Harry, to successfully cast any Unforgivable, you have to really want to use it. So if you use the Imperius, you must really want to control someone. To use the Cruciatus, you need to want to torture someone. To use the Killing Curse, you...you need to really want to kill someone," Draco said.

"It might be best if you forgot that I told you about this," Harry said seriously.

Blaise felt himself shudder under the intense look Harry was giving him. This was a side of Harry Potter he had never seen before. It felt as if his very soul were being examined and if he lied, he would not like the consequences. "Okay, Harry, consider it forgotten," Blaise said.

"Yeah, Harry," Draco agreed quickly.

"Thanks," Harry said as he felt himself relax.

"No, no problem," Blaise said.

"So what makes those three curses so bad? If other dark spells can hurt people, why are only these three considered unforgivable?" Harry asked.

"Oh, well, it's the intent behind them. If you were powerful enough, you would be able to cast an organ exploding hex, but to use the Cruciatus, you need to really want to torture," Draco said quietly.

"Oh, okay. So if I was powerful enough, I could use any other dark spell?" Harry asked.

"Yeah, but dark magic is very seriously punished by the ministry," Blaise cautioned.

"How seriously punished?" Harry asked.

"It depends. The ministry classifies every dark spell differently," Draco said.

"Give me an example," Harry said.

"I'll do one better. My father is on the committee to regulate Dark Magic, he told me about the levels one day. Class 1 through Class 4 dark spells, potions, and rituals are really minor stuff, and with ministry approval can be done legally. If you do them illegally, you just pay a fine to the ministry. The cheapest is like 5 galleons, but the most expensive is like 50,000 galleons. Class 5 dark spells, potions, or rituals are punishable by either a week in Azkaban or a 175,000 Galleon fine. After Class 5, everything is punished by going to Azkaban. Class 6 is for six months, Class 7 is for a year, Class 8 is for five years, Class 9 is for twenty years, Class 10 is for fifty years, and Class 11 are the Unforgivables," Blaise said.

"What's the punishment for the Unforgivables?" Harry asked curiously.

"Life in Azkaban or...well, if you really deserve it, the Dementor's kiss," Blaise said weakly.

"I'd take life in Azkaban," Draco said with a shudder.

"Why? What's the Dementor's kiss?" Harry asked.

"Dementors are the guards at Azkaban. They are nasty magical creatures that can suck out your soul," Draco said darkly.

"R-really?" Harry stammered, horrified at the thought of his soul being sucked out.

"Yeah, they also make you feel like you'll never be happy again. They make all your worst memories rise to the surface. That's why Azkaban is such a horrible place. People go mad reliving the worst moments of their life over and over again," Blaise explained with a shudder.

Harry winced as he thought about reliving being beaten by uncle Vernon every day for the rest of his life. Suddenly, a rather depressing train of thought struck. "Um, how well known are the Dementors and Azkaban?" He asked.

Draco and Blaise looked at him oddly for a moment before Draco said, "Anyone who has grown up a wizard has certainly been told about the horrors of Azkaban and the Dementors."

"Yeah, a lot of parents use it as a deterrent to bad behavior. Tell your kids if they are naughty, the ministry will show up one day and send them to the Dementors," Blaise added.

Harry felt rather uncomfortable now. So that means Tonks probably knows about these Dementors. It would explain why she was so damn upset with me when I said I didn't care about that oaf going to Azkaban.

For the rest of the lesson, Lockhart would periodically quiz the students about "important facts" from his books while Harry thought about what he would say to Tonks later. Harry didn't have to worry about Lockhart calling on him anymore, not after Harry told him that he couldn't cast one of the rare charms that he claimed to have created. Lockhart replied that Harry wasn't magically powerful enough to cast it, but after Harry said that Flitwick was unable to do the charm as well, Lockhart turned crimson and began talking about the weather.

When the lesson finally ended, Harry, Draco, and Blaise left the classroom and went back to the Slytherin dormitories.

"I wonder where Ginny is," Draco said.

"Probably in the restricted section with Tonks," Blaise said.

"Yeah, most likely. We probably won't see either of them till dinner," Harry said with a sigh. He was not looking forward to telling Tonks that while he now understood why Azkaban was so bad, he still didn't want to help her search for the chamber anymore. Maybe I'll help her look in those last few places. After that, I'm done, though.

"What's wrong with you?" Draco asked curiously.

"Nothing, just a little tired," Harry lied.

"Whatever, I'm going to head down to dinner, you coming?" Draco asked.

"Yeah," Harry said.

"You didn't know how bad Azkaban was, huh?" Blaise whispered quietly.

Harry turned to look at his friend before saying, "No."

"Tell her that. She'll understand, Harry. You couldn't have kept going anyway with that little sleep," Blaise said.

"I know, but still I'll apologize at dinner. I don't really want to get into another long drawn out fight like last year," Harry admitted.

"Good idea, I don't think any of us want that," Blaise said, chuckling.

"Would you two stop whispering like little girls and hurry up, I'm hungry," Draco said loudly, earning a scowl that promised pain from both Harry and Blaise.

Great Hall, Hogwarts

Harry, Draco, and Blaise sat down at the Slytherin table for dinner and waited for Tonks and Ginny to show up. Twenty minutes into dinner, Harry was starting to get annoyed.

"Merlin, Tonks needs to eat sometime," Harry grumbled.

"No kidding, she should at least let Ginny come down and get some food," Draco said.

"Maybe they actually found something and lost track of time," Blaise put forth.

"Not likely, Blaise. Anyway, if Tonks found something, she would be running to McGonagall to get Hagrid out of Azkaban," Harry said.

"Well, McGonagall isn't here, so maybe she did find something," Blaise remarked after scanning the room.

"McGonagall's not here?" Harry said as he looked up at the staff table.

Sure enough, Professor McGonagall wasn't there. In fact, Dumbledore, Snape, Flitwick, and Sprout were all missing.

"Where are all the house heads?" Harry asked.

"Probably in a meeting with Dumbledore," Draco said simply.

"No, that meeting is on Wednesday," Harry said.

"How do you know that?" Blaise asked.

"Because Flitwick and McGonagall don't give me a private lesson on Wednesday," Harry replied.

"So? They could have changed it this week. I doubt your lesson starting a few minutes late would really bother Dumbledore that much," Blaise said.

"Maybe," Harry said, not entirely convinced.

"I'm sure it's nothing, Harry. See, there's Snape and McGonagall right now," Draco said.

Indeed, both Snape and McGonagall entered the Great Hall through a side door; however, they did not go to the staff table. The two

professors looked right at the Slytherin table before locking eyes with Harry.

As they came closer, Harry could see that both professors seemed to be doing their best to appear calm; however, Harry didn't spend two nights a week with McGonagall and not learn to read her body language. Her eyes were periodically sweeping the hall as if searching for a potential attacker while her right hand was constantly near her hip, where Harry knew she kept her wand.

Even Snape was giving away some signs of being nervous. He walked a few feet behind McGonagall, his usual sneer replaced with an emotionless mask. His eyes also seemed to inspect the student population while keeping his hand near his wand.

The biggest giveaway, though, was that as McGonagall got closer, Harry could actually see her left hand trembling slightly.

"Something's wrong," Harry muttered before standing up to meet the teachers.

Draco and Blaise looked at him curiously before they too stood up slowly.

"Mr. Potter, Mr. Malfoy, Mr. Zabini, if you could come with us, please," Professor Snape said.

Harry nodded his head and followed the two professors out of the Great Hall. As soon as they were out of earshot, Harry said, "What happened?"

Snape and McGonagall both hid their surprise that Harry realized something was wrong.

"Mr. Potter, I'm sorry to say that both Ms. Tonks and Ms. Weasley were found petrified an hour ago," McGonagall said wearily.

Harry felt the color drain from his face. No, no, no I misheard her. Tonks and Ginny aren't petrified, they couldn't be. I saw them at lunch. "No...no, you have to be mistaken," Harry said.

Snape and McGonagall shared a pained look before Snape said, "Mr. Potter, it's true. We don't know exactly when they were attacked, but we believe it was sometime shortly after lunch as that was the last they were seen."

"What do you mean, you don't know when they were petrified?!" Harry raged. Harry really could have cared less about when Tonks and Ginny were petrified; just having Snape deliver the news to him was enough to anger him, though.

"They were found less than an hour ago, and it was only sheer luck that they were found at all, Mr. Potter. A student bumped into them in the hallway. They were under an invisibility cloak. When Mr. Brock knocked into them, the cloak fell off, and they were discovered," McGonagall said.

"But Ginny's a Slytherin and Tonks might as well be," Draco declared.

"I am aware, Mr. Malfoy," Snape said.

"B...But Ginny's a pureblood!" Draco said, the fear evident in his voice.

"Mr. Malfoy, I am aware of Ms. Weasley's heritage. That does not change the fact that she is petrified," Snape said softly.

"You said they were found an hour ago. Why are you just now telling us?" Harry demanded.

"There is a protocol in place for this, Mr. Potter. We had to contact the headmaster, the board of governors, and their families first," McGonagall explained.

"Families," Harry practically spat, "Tonks can't stand Andromeda, and Ginny despises everyone except Bill and her mother! You should have told us as soon as you knew what happened to them!"

"Mr. Potter, calm down now or you will not be allowed to see them," Snape threatened.

Whatever Snape was expecting from the threat, it was not for Harry Potter to growl, push him out of the way with a surprising amount of strength, and then take off running for the hospital wing, Draco and Blaise right behind him.

Harry absently heard both Snape and McGonagall screaming for them to stop, but he didn't care. He had to see his friends to really believe that they were petrified.

When Harry reached the hospital wing, he tried to push the door open; however, it was magically locked. He quickly drew his wand and said, "Alohomora." He tried to open the door again, but it wouldn't budge. Harry suddenly felt several emotions at once. He hoped that it was all some sort of sick joke, he was scared that Tonks and Ginny were really petrified, he was angry at not being told sooner, but most of all he loathed the damn door that was stopping him from finding some answers. The gargoyle growled in frustration and Harry unknowingly echoed the loud growl as well. Forgetting magic entirely, Harry just started to hit the door with his fist, hoping to let loose some of his frustration on the old mahogany wood. Surprisingly, though, after his fists connected, the door was blown off its hinges and into the hospital wing.

Ignoring the completely terrified expressions of everyone in the room, Harry ran inside only to collapse to his knees in front of two beds. Tonks and Ginny were frozen with identical looks of terror on their faces. Harry felt his anger disappear instantly as he looked at his two petrified friends. As quick as the anger left him, a new emotion took its place. Rage.

For the first time ever, Harry and the gargoyle agreed on something. They would kill whoever was responsible for hurting his friends. The Gargoyle provided image after image of what they would do to the person responsible and Harry found himself agreeing with every idea.

"Harry!" a voice demanded.

Harry slowly tore his eyes away from his two petrified friends and looked into the eyes of Professor McGonagall.

"Harry, you need to get a hold of yourself," McGonagall commanded, pointing her wand between his eyes.

A low growl was the only response McGonagall received, causing the Transfiguration teacher's eyes to momentarily widen in disbelief before shouting, "Stupefy!"

Harry dodged the spell, but didn't see the second stunner come from behind and hit him in the back.

"Thank you, Andromeda," Minerva said.

Draco just looked at his aunt with a wrinkled nose, pointed his wand at Harry and said, "Enervate."

"What happened?" Harry asked opening his eyes slowly.

"I think it's safe to say that you lost control of your magic, Potter," Professor Snape sneered in disgust.

"Lost control?" Harry asked tiredly.

"Tell me, Potter, what is the point of you attending Hogwarts if you can't keep control of your magic?! You're here to learn how to be a wizard, not to throw uncontrolled magical temper tantrums like a five year old!" Snape barked out.

At any other time, Harry would have thrown back an insult to his head of house, but the combination of feeling drained and actually seeing what remained of the hospital wing caused him to remain silent.

The hospital wing looked like it had been hit by a muggle bomb. The large wooden door was in several pieces a good ten feet away from the door frame, the walls had large black scorch marks and looked like they had been burned, several potions cabinets had been blown apart and their contents now littered the floor. The most disconcerting thing, though, was that several unused beds were currently on fire. As Harry began to survey the room, he noticed several terrified

looking redheads with their wands drawn and a wide-eyed Mrs. Tonks standing not five feet behind him.

Before Harry could articulate a response to the destruction he apparently had caused, Ron Weasley bellowed, "POTTER, GET OUT! NO ONE WANTS YOU HERE!"

Harry was too tired to argue with the stupidest Weasley; however, Draco and Blaise had no such problem.

"And what in Merlin's name are you doing here, Weasley? If Ginny were awake she'd tell you to get the bloody hell out!" Draco said.

"I'm her family!" Ron barked back.

"No you're not, Weasley. You made that perfectly clear. You, your father, and your three idiotic brothers have treated her like dirt this entire year! You are not her family," Draco declared.

"How dare you!" Mrs. Weasley said indignantly.

"Mr. Malfoy, detention for a week!" McGonagall said sharply.

"The truth hurts, doesn't it, Weasley! After everything Ginny has put up with from you and your brothers, you don't get to call her family anymore," Draco said passionately.

"What are you talking about?" Mrs. Weasley demanded.

"Why don't you ask your idiot sons? They might be able to tell you just what they have done to make Ginny's year horrible. You know that they didn't even give her a Christmas present?" Blaise asked darkly.

"That's probably the least cruel thing they did, Blaise. I think Ron's public declaration that Ginny wasn't his sister earlier this year was more embarrassing than that," Draco said menacingly.

Mrs. Weasley looked completely shocked at Blaise and Draco's statements. She turned to look at each of her youngest sons, and

was even more shocked to see the obviously guilty expressions on all of their faces. "Boys! Is this true?" she bellowed.

"What does it matter? This is Potter's fault, he's been petrifying people all year!" Ron said accusingly.

"You are a bloody dumbass, Weasley. I would never hurt Tonks or Ginny," Harry said not looking away from the frozen form of his two friends.

"You probably just attacked them to throw everyone off your trail. Well, it isn't going to work!" Ron said, his face turning red.

Draco clearly couldn't take Ron's stupidity any longer. "STUPEFY!"

The spell was about two feet from Weasley's head when it connected with a powerful magical shield. The spell broke, ricocheted off the shield and set fire to another hospital bed.

Curious to see who blocked the spell, Harry turned around and saw Albus Dumbledore walking calmly into the destroyed hospital wing. Dumbledore casually waved his wand and the burning beds fixed themselves while the scorch marks on the walls disappeared.

"You!" Harry growled menacingly.

Dumbledore just looked at Harry, his twinkle completely gone from his eyes. "Me," he replied.

"This is your fault! If you had been able to find whatever is doing this, Tonks and Ginny never would have been attacked!" Harry said cruelly.

Dumbledore face remained neutral; however, Harry's accusation weighed heavily on his conscious. The old headmaster opened his mouth to respond when another voice beat him to it.

"I couldn't agree with you more, Harry," Lucius Malfoy said as he strode into the hospital wing.

"Lucius, to what do we owe your visit?" Dumbledore asked politely, not liking this turn of events.

"I'm here to inform you that the board of governors has seen fit to have you removed as headmaster of Hogwarts. Professor McGonagall will take your place for the rest of the year with Professor Flitwick acting as assistant headmaster," Lucius said imperiously.

"What?! You can't take Dumbledore away from the school! The attacks will only increase without him here!" Andromeda exclaimed while the Weasleys voiced their agreement.

"The decision has already been made," Lucius said.

"Very well, I shall transfer control of the school's wards over to Minerva later tonight," Dumbledore said sadly.

"Lucius, this is a mistake," Andromeda said.

"No, the mistake was keeping him on as headmaster after my son was assaulted," Lucius barked.

"So that's what this is about, Lucius!" Mr. Weasley accused.

Lucius just sneered at Weasley and turned his attention back to his sister-in-law. "Andromeda, your daughter is lying in bed petrified. If Albus Dumbledore is unable to protect the students of this school, then actions must be taken," he said with an air of finality.

Harry numbly watched as Andromeda, Mr. Weasley, and Lucius continued to argue back and forth while Mrs. Weasley berated her sons for their treatment of their sister. He absentmindedly noted that McGonagall was sending him a look that was a strange mixture of sadness, curiosity, and resentment. Snape just glared, but Harry saw the man's face change to one of sympathy when he turned to look at Draco and Ginny. Harry was further surprised when Snape walked over and put a hand on his godson's shoulder. Blaise stood quietly next to Tonks' bed as Harry locked eyes with Dumbledore and did his best to convey all the anger and resentment he had for the man with a single look. Dumbledore clearly got the message as he lowered his

head and quietly left the room, fixing the destroyed door on his way out.

With the object of his anger gone, Harry turned his attention to his petrified best friend. Kneeling at her bedside, Harry felt his face hardening in determination. "I promise I'll find whoever did this, Tonks," Harry whispered softly as he held her frozen hand in his own.

A/N- Well ladies and gentlemen another chapter. Hope you all liked it.

Now I'm sure many of you have noticed that the name of this fic has changed to Dark Lord Potter Part 1. If you have checked out my profile, you already know that I plan on writing three parts to this story rather than one massive super long epic. Part 1 will end after Harry's 2nd year so that means there are only 2 more chapters in part 1. Oh and by the way, I have written out the last two chapters, both are over 14K words; however, I wouldn't expect a quick posting as I have a lot of editing to do before they are finished. In an ideal world both chapters would be posted before I finish my current semester, but I doubt it'll happen with all my end of term papers and finals. I will do my best to insure that at least one chapter is posted by the end of April though

Now my reason for breaking up the fic is quite simple. At the end of year 2 and year 5 there will be a significant change in character relationships. I know that's not telling a lot but that is all I will say for now because I don't want to give away plot information.

Thanks again to everyone who takes the time to leave a review!

## Chapter 25

### The Heirs of Slytherin

Tuesday, April 13th, Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

Blaise Zabini never ever thought of himself as someone who was brave. After all, bravery was the trait of Gryffindors and Blaise was certainly no Gryffindor. However, as he carefully walked through the deserted Hogwarts dungeons, he couldn't help but consider himself courageous. Absolutely no one, especially no Slytherins, walked anywhere in Hogwarts alone anymore, yet here he was, slowly making his way out of the dungeons by himself.

A week had passed since Ginny and Tonks had been attacked by Slytherin's monster, but things had drastically changed at Hogwarts. As much as Blaise knew Harry hated to hear it, the board of Governors removing Dumbledore might have been the dumbest thing they could have done. Without the powerful presence of the headmaster, fear and paranoia seemed to have completely taken control of the student population. McGonagall, Flitwick, Sprout, and Snape tried to keep the students calm and focused on school, but it was a seemingly impossible task to stop the rising tension in the school.

Each house seemed to be handling the recent attacks by the heir of Slytherin very differently. Gryffindor house was out for blood after someone pointed out that there had been more Gryffindors petrified than any other house. The Gryffindors had apparently adopted the belief that the only way to stop Slytherin's heir would be to attack every Slytherin they saw. After two Slytherin first years were bound and hexed by a group of Gryffindor fourth years, Slytherin house had responded by 'accidentally' knocking the offending Gryffindors down one of the moving staircases, resulting in four Gryffindors spending time in the hospital wing. A full scale war had almost erupted between Gryffindor and Slytherin after the incident; however, temporary-Headmistress McGonagall stopped any retaliation by issuing a universal threat of expulsion and wand snapping to the next person who attacked someone from another house.

The Ravenclaws had barricaded themselves in their common room when they realized that no one had been attacked in or around a common room. It was rumored that the entire house had voted and decided that they wouldn't leave for any reason except for meals and class. Blaise wasn't completely sure if that rumor was true or not, though, as conversations between Slytherin and the other three houses had practically stopped entirely.

The most dramatic difference had to have occurred in Slytherin. After the attack on Ginny, the blood purists had panicked. The same people who were once secretly cheering the heir of Slytherin now found themselves refusing to leave the common room. The house of the privileged and the powerful had finally realized that their money, family name, and blood status might not make them immune from the heir's purging.

Of course, not everyone in Slytherin was scared. A small group of people that included Parkinson, Bullstrode, and Davis actually thought Ginny's petrification was a good thing. They argued that the heir had singled out Ginny because she was a Weasley, and blood-traitors didn't deserve to be in Slytherin.

A dark look crossed Blaise's face as he remembered Harry's response to Parkinson's theory. Harry had often threatened to send his deadly familiar after someone in their sleep, but he had never acted upon it. After hearing Parkinson's comments during dinner, Harry had apparently decided to teach her, and the rest of the house, a lesson – don't anger Harry James Potter. An hour after everyone had fallen asleep, screams woke up the entire house. The screams, followed by several loud banging noises, were quickly identified as coming from the second year girls' dormitory.

It took three prefects ten minutes to dispel the numerous locking and sealing charms on the second years' door before it could be opened. What they found inside were dozens of angry serpents hissing and biting the five second year girls.

The girls were rushed to the hospital wing where Madam Pomfrey gave them several snake anti-venoms. Luckily, none of the serpents possessed too strong a poison; however, the sheer number of bites

Parkinson, Davis, and Bullstrode received earned them a two day stay in the hospital wing. While the official inquiry into what happened was left unanswered, the staff and students all suspected that one person was behind it. Harry Potter.

There were two overwhelming reasons why everyone suspected Harry. The first was that after Daphne Greengrass and Michele Moon were given a calming draught, they revealed that the snakes left them alone and focused on biting Parkinson, Davis, and Bullstrode. The few bites that Daphne and Michele received, they admitted were from stepping on snakes as they fled the room after the door was opened. The other coincidence that the staff and students were aware of was that Harry's elf was the house elf who cleared all the serpents out of the second years dorm, and did so with a well practiced ease of handling snakes. When confronted with this, Harry simply smiled and said that his elf had practice with handling his snake.

Blaise shivered slightly as he recalled the cold look of amusement on Harry's face after Snape had stormed out of the common room. Harry had changed in the week following Tonks and Ginny's petrification. He had begun to exude a level of confidence that bordered on arrogance. He was the only person in all of Hogwarts who would wander the school by himself. He also began openly flaunting his lack of attendance to several classes, something that greatly annoyed the teachers. Blaise actually suspected that the only reason McGonagall and Snape didn't do more than dock points and give detentions was the fact that they had more important things to worry about.

Of course, Harry wasn't being lazy in his disregard for class; he just found a better use of his time. Blaise knew that Harry was looking for the Chamber of Secrets. It didn't take a Master Arithmancer to figure that out. Blaise and Draco had each offered their assistance to help, which was why Blaise was now acting like a Gryffindor and walking to the library alone.

"I suppose it's still better than what Draco and Harry are doing," Blaise thought. There weren't enough Galleons in Gringotts for Blaise to go out and actively look for the Chamber of Secrets at night! Harry and Draco had taken up leaving the Slytherin common room under Harry's invisibility cloak and returning practically at dawn from

searching the school. How Harry was able to convince Draco to go out and search for Chamber was a mystery to Blaise, but he was sure there were some threats issued by Harry to garner their mutual friend's cooperation. Regardless of how Harry convinced Draco to help, if it wasn't for Harry's elf's remarkable ability to find a never ending supply of pepper up, nutrient, and revitalizing potions, which oddly corresponded with Professor Snape's personal Potions cupboard being broken into, Blaise was sure Harry and Draco would have collapsed during class from exhaustion.

"Blaise," a stern voice said from behind him.

Blaise spun around quickly, his wand in his hand, and a curse on his lips only to find himself face to face with Susan, Hannah, Ernie Macmillan, Justin Finch-Fletchley, and Zacharias Smith. "Merciful Merlin, you scared me!"

"We scared you! What are you doing walking around the school by yourself? Do you have a death wish, Zabini?" Susan ranted.

"You are aware that there is a monster roaming around trying to kill people, right?!" Hannah demanded.

"Yes," Blaise said, a little angry at being talked down to, "it's hard to forget that two of your best friends are petrified in the hospital wing."

Susan and Hannah's anger and fear at seeing one of their friends so carelessly wandering the unsafe halls of the school immediately disappeared following Blaise's clipping retort.

"How are Tonks and Gi...", Susan started.

"Why were you wandering the halls alone, Zabini?" Ernie demanded, taking out his wand. Justin and Zacharias quickly followed Ernie's example and pointed their own wands at the lone Slytherin.

"If I get cursed by a bunch of bloody Hufflepuffs, I'm going to kill you, Potter!" Blaise thought frantically while he outwardly showed no reaction to the three wands pointed at him.

"Put your wands away!" Susan and Hannah ordered simultaneously.

"No," Ernie said, "I want to know why this Slytherin was walking around by himself. Everyone walks around in groups, even Slytherins. So why is he wandering the halls alone? Where are you going?"

"I don't believe that's any of your business, Macmillan," Blaise replied calmly.

"Going to call your monster, are you, Zabini! Or maybe you're just going to feed it for Potter or Malfoy," Smith sneered.

Blaise appraised Smith carefully before replying, "Believe whatever you want, Smith, I don't particularly care."

"Oh, stop it," Hannah cried out in disgust, "Blaise, just tell them where you were going. Zach, Ernie, Justin, put your wands away before Susan and I curse you."

The three Hufflepuff boys slowly put their wands away when they realized that Susan already had her wand out and was pointing it directly at them.

Blaise smirked at the three boys before casually saying, "Well, I'm off to the library. It was nice to see you, Susan, Hannah." Blaise had taken a total of three steps before two pairs of arms reached out and grabbed him.

"I don't think so, Zabini, you're not going anywhere by yourself," Susan said strictly.

"Too true, Susan," Hannah agreed.

"Besides, I need to do an Astronomy essay, and you just volunteered to help, Blaise," Susan added.

"Oh, and we also have the Charms essay for Flitwick due in two days. Blaise, you can help with that, as well," Hannah said pleasantly.

Blaise just groaned and said, "But...but I just need to check out a book for Harry. I don't think..."

"Well, you should have thought about the consequences of wandering the halls by yourself before you just agreed to walk to the library and get a book," Susan said sternly.

"How is Harry, by the way? We haven't seen much of him this year," Hannah asked curiously.

"I think that the entire school thinking he was the evil heir of Slytherin probably had something to do with that," Blaise replied defensively.

"Don't take that tone with us, Blaise Anthony Zabini! Hannah was just concerned. Now, how Harry is taking Tonks and Ginny getting petrified?" Susan asked.

The no-nonsense tone that Susan's question carried made Blaise suddenly feel like he was back being questioned about his intentions by Amelia Bones again. Shaking his head slightly, Blaise said: "He's coping. I was a little worried that he would blame himself for them getting attacked, but he's put the blame solely on the heir and his monster."

"Why would he blame himself?" Hannah asked.

"Err...well, Harry and Tonks got into a bit of an argument and Tonks stormed out of the Great Hall with Ginny. They were attacked later that day," Blaise admitted.

"Oh, that's not his fault, though. It was only bad luck," Hannah said sadly as they entered the library and approached Madam Pince.

"He knows that," Blaise said before turning his attention to the uncompromising Hogwarts librarian. "Excuse me, Madam Pince, I need to check out a book, but I don't know where to look for it."

"Do you know the title?" she asked.

"Yes, I wrote it down," Blaise said as he removed the small piece of parchment from his robes. "It's called Tutaminis ex Offensus."

Madam Pince's head shot up and she stared right at Blaise. Instinctively, Blaise tightened his Occlumency and wondered what exactly Harry had gotten him into.

"One moment please, Mr. Zabini, while I contact your head of house," Madam Pince said sternly before walking into her office.

"Why does she have to contact Professor Snape?" Susan asked.

"I have no idea," Blaise replied.

"Why do you want the book?" Hannah asked curiously.

Blaise's response was cut short though when Madam Pince walked back out of her office carrying the book in question. "Here you are, Mr. Zabini."

"Thank you, ma'am," Blaise said, accepting the rather large tome.

"Madam Pince, why did you need to talk to Professor Snape before you gave Blaise that book?" Susan asked.

"Ms. Bones, all books on dueling that are not in the restricted section require a student to be in good standing with the school. It wouldn't do to have troublemakers get their hands on a book for dueling spells and strategies. I had to confirm Mr. Zabini's status with his head of house," Madam Pince patiently explained.

"Err, what exactly makes someone 'in good standing'?" Hannah asked.

"The interpretation of that has generally been left up to the student's head of house. I know Professor McGonagall will not allow a student to be in good standing if they are receiving too many detentions and Professor Flitwick demands that his students maintain an Acceptable grade in every class," Madam Pince said.

“Well, thank you, ma’am,” Blaise said.

“It’s due back in ten days, Mr. Zabini,” Madam Pince sternly reminded him.

“Yes, ma’am,” Blaise replied tensely as he led Susan and Hannah to a secluded corner of the library.

Susan and Hannah had just taken out their essays when there was a soft pop followed by an excited squeal. “Ooooo, Mister Zabini got the book. Master Harry will be so pleased!”

Susan and Hannah had jumped slightly at the sudden appearance of Harry’s house elf, but Blaise simply stared back at it calmly and said: “Harry used me to get a book.”

Andi sent a stern glare at Blaise before saying: “Mr. Zamboni is to give Andi that book.”

Blaise’s calm façade disappeared at the elf’s spiteful butchering of his last name. “Why should I give this book to Harry when he didn’t even bother explaining why he needed me to get it?”

“If the Zabini does not give Andi the book, Andi will not protect you on your way back to the snake house,” Andi said darkly.

“Are you threatening me, elf?” Blaise asked angrily while Susan and Hannah stared wide-eyed at a house elf talking that way to a wizard.

Andi just stared at Blaise for a moment before saying: “Is you giving Andi the book or does Andi need to tell Master Harry about the unhelpful Zabini?”

Blaise practically threw the book at Andi who simply waved a hand at the book, causing it to come to a stop directly in front of her. “Thank you,” Andi said before taking the book and disappearing with a soft pop.

“I’ve never seen an elf act like that before,” Hannah said in shock.

"I didn't think elves could act like that," Susan added.

"Don't let them fool you. Elves are devious little bastards that will do anything to serve their masters, and Andi is fanatically loyal to Harry," Blaise muttered.

"I wonder what it meant when it said it wouldn't protect you," Hannah said.

"Exactly that. I bet Harry had Andi watching me to make sure nothing attacked me on my way up to the library," Blaise growled.

"Did Harry honestly think an elf could stop Slytherin's monster?" Susan asked incredulously.

"No," Blaise said, now more than a little bit annoyed, "but Andi could have instantly gotten a teacher had I been attacked. Not to mention it would have seen what the monster was."

"What did you mean that Harry used you?" Susan suddenly asked.

Blaise snorted before saying, "Do you honestly think Harry would ever be considered in good standing? He doesn't even bother going to half his classes anymore."

"So he had you go and get the book for him," Hannah rationalized. "But why didn't he tell you?"

"Do you mean why didn't he tell me about Andi protecting me? Or why didn't he tell me about needing me to get that book?" Blaise asked sarcastically.

"Both," Susan said, "What would have been so bad about telling you?"

"Nothing," Blaise said softly, "he knows I am willing to help. He just didn't tell me."

"That doesn't make any sense. Why would Harry do that?" Susan asked.

"I don't know," Blaise admitted.

Thursday, April 22nd, Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

While a majority of the school was at dinner, Harry Potter and Draco Malfoy carefully walked through the 2nd floor Charms corridor until they arrived at an unused classroom.

"Alohomora," Draco muttered, quietly unlocking the room.

As soon as the room was unlocked, Harry casually opened it and strode inside. Draco immediately followed and closed the door.

"Silencio, ignotus," Harry said, quickly sending the two spells at the door.

"When did you learn the Notice-Me-Not charm?" Draco asked.

"Remember when Flitwick assigned me that massive essay on the Confundus charm after the Dragon debacle during our first year? Well, the Notice-Me-Not charm is basically just an adapted version of the Confundus charm, only it's focused on stopping someone from paying attention to a specific area," Harry patiently explained.

"So I take it that means you can cast the Confundus charm now, as well, huh?" Draco asked.

Harry didn't answer, but his mischievous smirk told Draco all he needed to know.

"Alright, get out the book, tonight is the last night we can use it before Blaise has to return it to the library," Harry said.

"Explain to me again why Blaise isn't here?" Draco asked. "He did get the book for us, after all."

Harry pinched the bridge of his nose as he felt the gargoyle's annoyance at being questioned. Pushing aside the urge to just tell Draco because I said so, Harry replied, "Blaise is probably the only

person who can ever check out this book again, Draco. It wouldn't do to have him getting in trouble for damaging an empty room practising spells."

"Just because you couldn't check out that book doesn't mean that I wouldn't have been allowed. Uncle Severus would never say that I am not in good standing," Draco said arrogantly.

"Do you really think he would have allowed you to check out that book immediately after I was rejected? He probably would have denied your request just to bother me! I'm surprised he allowed Blaise to check out the book, and I'm not going to risk Blaise losing that privilege," Harry emphatically stated.

"You're thinking way too much into this. Uncle Severus is not out to ruin your life, Harry!" Draco said exasperatedly.

"This is an argument for another time, Draco. We only have an hour before I go meet Flitwick and you have to be back in the common room," Harry said, ending the discussion.

"Fine," Draco acquiesced, "but you're still being stupid."

Harry couldn't stop the growl of annoyance from leaving his mouth.

"And can't you put that gargoyle back on a leash! For Merlin's sake, Potter, what normal person growls at someone?" Draco demanded.

"Proicio," Harry said, sending a flinging hex at Draco.

Caught off guard by his friend's sudden attack, Draco was thrown through the air before crashing into a desk.

"Are you ready to get to work now? Or do you feel like complaining some more?" Harry asked.

"Incendio," Draco barked out, sending a ball of fire at Harry.

"Glacius," Harry said lazily, causing the incoming fireball to freeze and fall to the ground before it ever came close to him.

"You know too many charms," Draco muttered as he walked back over to his friend.

Harry only smirked at him. "I didn't hear you complaining about that when I locked Pansy in her dorm with the snakes."

Being reminded of Pansy being bitten by a horde of angry snakes had the immediate effect of improving Draco's mood. "You still need to teach me that sealing charm that you used," Draco commented.

"Later, Draco," Harry replied as he opened Tutaminis ex Offensus, "Did we get to the Bombardment Hex?"

"No, but it's as good a place as any to start. What does it do?" Draco asked.

"It acts like an overpowered banishing charm," Harry said, unable to keep the smile off his face.

"Which means it probably requires a lot more power than the banishing charm. I don't think I need to remind you that I was only able to do a proper banishing charm yesterday, Harry. It is a fourth year spell and some of us are not Charms gifted, you know," Draco said.

"Well, it's a good thing you were able to learn it, then, because we're starting the Bombardment Hex now," Harry said seriously before pointing his wand at a desk and saying, "Bombarda."

As soon as the spell struck, the desk exploded into hundreds of pieces that went splintering off in every direction. Harry had just enough time to be surprised by the spell's result before he was tackled to the ground by Draco, narrowly avoiding a large chunk of wood that flew inches over their heads.

"What the hell was that, Potter, because I've never seen a banishing spell that causes a desk to explode before!" Draco demanded as soon as he stood up.

"I did say it was an overpowered banishing charm," Harry countered.

Draco just waved off Harry's comment and immediately walked over and picked up the book. After quickly scanning the section on the spell, Draco snapped the book shut and snarled: "Did you never learn to read as a child, Potter? It says the Bombardment Hex acts as an overpowered blasting charm, not banishing!"

A bright smile suddenly made its way onto Harry's face and Draco could practically see the excitement building in his best friend's eyes. For what seemed like the hundredth time, Draco cursed the damn gargoyle's influence on Harry.

"Terribly sorry about that, Draco," Harry said, not sounding sorry at all, "Now, I suggest you cast a shield."

It took a second for Draco to realize what his friend had just said, but as soon as he saw Harry point his wand at another desk, Draco hastily cast the shield spell.

"Bombarda!" Harry said, jabbing his wand at another desk, immediately causing its destruction.

Harry continued his senseless destruction of the classroom until all thirty desks resembled nothing more than pieces of wood and sawdust. With no more desks to destroy, Harry walked back over to the book and flipped a few pages before finding the spell he wanted. He took a few moments to look at the wand movement and incantation before he set the book down and walked to the center of the room. He casually waved his wand and the pieces of destroyed desks began to organize themselves into several piles all around the room with Harry standing in the center. Once Draco had joined him in the middle of the room, Harry pointed his wand at one of the piles of wood, and casually said, "Ater Flamma."

A ball of black fire appeared at the tip of Harry's wand and continued to grow until Harry jabbed his wand, sending the fire at the nearest pile of wood. The black fire burnt through the scraps of wood quickly; however, when all the wood was gone, the black flame remained, scorching the stone classroom floor. Harry carefully made a circular

motion with his wand before flicking it upwards. As Harry's wand flicked up, the original ball of conjured black flame rose up out of the large black fire, which had grown significantly from engulfing the pile of wood, and floated into the air, following the path of Harry's wand around the room.

"How are you doing that?" Draco asked as he watched Harry fly the ball of black fire around the room.

"I'm using a variation of the levitation charm on the fire to control the flame. As long as I keep my focus I should be able to easily control the two spells together," Harry said as he guided the fire to the various piles of wood, setting them all on fire.

"I take it this is what Flitwick has been teaching you," Draco said, trying to ignore the oppressive heat and fear that came from being surrounded by a dozen pillars of black fire.

"Yes. You'll probably start learning combining charms next year, but you won't learn anything this advanced until the end of your fourth year. Using multiple charms simultaneously is required to get an O in your Charms OWL," Harry said as he and Draco stood in the center of a burning classroom.

"So, how many times have you done this kind of thing?" Draco asked trying to make the question sound casual and without the fear he was feeling as the black flames continued to grow.

"You mean how many times have I used the levitation charm with a fire spell? Or how many times have I controlled twelve magically enchanted fires from consuming me or sucking too much air out of an enclosed space?" Harry asked.

"Both," Draco said as he quickly realized just how difficult controlling the fires around him must be.

"Never. This is the first time I've tried it," Harry replied, not noticing his friend's face suddenly turn pale in terror.

“Finite!” Draco screamed pointing his wand at the massive black flame that was closest to the door; however, rather than making the fire disappear, the amount of black fire blocking the only escape from the room doubled in size. Draco, sweating from both fear and the oppressive heat, angrily turned to face his friend.

“Are you mad? Stop the spell before we’re trapped in this bloody inferno!” Draco exclaimed, losing any resemblance of a well trained aristocrat.

“Hmm, ten minutes, not bad,” Harry commented before saying “Finite” and making all the torrents of black fire immediately disappear.

Draco sputtered for a moment before turning his questioning gaze to Harry.

“Only the caster or someone significantly more powerful than the caster can cancel that spell. I just wanted to see how long it would take you to freak out,” Harry said mischievously before laughing.

“Are you psychotic? What could you possibly find entertaining about making me scared witless!” Draco demanded.

Harry just shrugged his shoulders as he continued to chuckle. When he composed himself, he said: “I had a bad day, I needed a laugh.”

“Was your gargoyle pms-ing or something?” Draco barked back angrily.

Harry glared at Draco and quickly sent a stinging hex at his friend, which Draco easily dodged. “Next time it’ll be a flinging hex,” Harry grumbled before saying: “I take it you didn’t read the prophet today?”

“No. As much as I dislike the headmaster, even I get tired of reading about how useless he is. I don’t know how you can continue to read practically the same article day after day,” Draco said as he finally began to compose himself.

“Well, they gave the old man a break today and refocused on their other favorite target,” Harry said.

"They're not blaming you again, are they? I thought Flitwick put a stop to that," Draco said.

"No, I'm not the evil heir of Slytherin anymore. I'm the heartbroken young man whose love was tragically struck down," Harry sneered.

"What?" Draco asked completely confused.

"Tonks! The prophet found out she was petrified and now we've been involved for seven months. Do you know how many people have asked me how I was handling the situation today? I swear I almost cursed a first year Puff when she practically broke into tears and said how sorry she was for me," Harry said, rolling his eyes.

It was only his advanced knowledge in Occlumency that stopped Draco from laughing outright at the truly annoyed look on his friend's face. "Th-that's t-terrible," Draco said.

Harry could only glare at his friend's obvious lack of sincerity. Harry's glare, as it turned out, was the final straw for Draco and he immediately began to laugh. When he was finally able to control himself, helped along by a series of stinging hexes hitting him, he asked: "So what's the big deal, anyway? So a bunch of Puffs are acting sappy around you? Who cares what they think!"

"It's annoying," Harry lied. "Now, you had better leave or you won't make it back to the common room."

"What am I suppose to tell anyone who asks why we weren't at dinner?" Draco asked.

"Tell them I was off to the Chamber of Secrets preparing to kill mudbloods. What do I care what you tell people, Draco? You're a Slytherin, right? Just make something up on the way back. Tell them we ate in the kitchens or something," Harry said flippantly as he began removing the Notice-Me-Not and silencing charm from the door.

"Do you know where the kitchens are?" Draco asked.

"No, but they don't know that. Now, I'm late for my lesson with Flitwick. I'll talk to you later. Oh, and I suggest you get as far away from this room as possible so they don't blame you for the...redcoration," Harry said as he walked out of the destroyed room and shifted into the shadow realm. He quickly made his way down the hallway and into Professor Flitwick's classroom.

It was another five minutes before the classroom door opened and Flitwick stepped inside.

"Hello Professor," Harry said, causing Flitwick to immediately drop to the ground in a roll and fire off a stunner.

Harry hurriedly cast the Protego shield to stop the spell; however, after deflecting Flitwick's spell, Harry's shield fell, leaving him open to the follow-up Stunner Flitwick sent.

Following dinner in the Great Hall, Filius Flitwick had walked back to his office in order to make his tutoring session with The-Boy-Who-Was-His-Favorite-Student. Harry Potter was everything Filius could have ever asked for in a pupil. He was witty, dedicated, and incredibly intelligent; the fact that Harry was the son of Lily Evans, one of Filius' greatest and most adored students, only put Harry in higher esteem. The truth was, if it wasn't for Harry's vicious cunning and ambition, Filius would have demanded that Dumbledore resort the boy into Ravenclaw a long time ago.

Harry's abilities inside the Charms classroom were practically unparalleled in the history of Hogwarts. His learning of OWL-level Charms as a second year amazed Filius and left the other staff members in disbelief. Outside of classroom, though, Harry had found his fair share of controversy. His natural affinity for magic, his friendship with the young Draco Malfoy, his rumored displeasure towards muggleborns —most notably his treatment of Ms. Granger— and his spotty disciplinary reputation had made him a prime suspect for many of the staff as the heir of Slytherin. Of course, out of the four heads of house, only one believed in Harry's involvement. Filius, Minerva, and Severus all fanatically opposed any possibility of Harry being the heir. Filius and Minerva because of the amount of time they

had spent with Harry, and Severus simply refused to believe that a Potter could possibly be the heir of Slytherin.

This year was especially difficult for Filius as tensions between his favorite student and the Headmaster escalated. Filius had tried to stay neutral with the problems between Harry and Albus, yet he was often finding himself in a precarious situation. Albus, seeing the closeness Filius had with Harry, had often asked his advice on how to garner Harry's trust and friendship, and Harry, seeing Filius as a sympathetic mentor, would often come to him to vent about the headmaster's manipulations and unfairness. It was an utterly dreadful position for Filius because he understood both Harry and Albus' arguments, yet he saw no real way he could help one of them without damaging the confidence of the other. Filius had settled for providing council and acting as devil's advocate for both Albus and Harry in the hopes that they might better understand one another. It was a tricky situation that had temporarily culminated with the headmaster's dismissal. Filius had heard of Harry's angry remarks to Dumbledore just prior to the headmaster's provisional removal from Hogwarts, and Filius had clearly seen the look of absolute delight on Harry's face amongst all the shocked students when the headmaster's departure was brought up the next morning in the Great Hall.

While Filius was absolutely unhappy with the headmaster being forced out by the Board of Governors, he did always try to look for a bright side to every situation. As far as Filius could tell, there was only one good thing that came about out of Minerva ascending to the position of headmistress, and that was her not being able to continue with Harry's advanced Transfiguration training. When Minerva had informed Harry that she would be unable to continue his sessions, Harry had immediately asked if Filius would be willing to fill the void left by not having advanced Transfiguration twice a week. Filius was hesitant about continuing their sessions with the heir of Slytherin still at large; however, Harry would not take no for an answer and said that should Filius cancel his lessons, he would just go to an unused classroom to practice. Knowing that Harry was absolutely serious, Filius reluctantly agreed to continue Harry's lessons. After all, he couldn't have the boy wandering the school unsupervised with Slytherin's monster on the prowl.

Arriving at his classroom, Filius cast the standard ward diagnostic spell at his door. Filius Flitwick was not an overtly paranoid man; however, he was certainly not a fool. With the heir of Slytherin and a monster loose in the school, he took precautions to insure that his classroom and office were protected. Among the numerous wards that kept his room and office secure was a detection spell that would identify if anyone had tried to force their way into the room. Seeing that the spell registered no one attempting to access his room, Filius opened the door, casually stepped inside, and closed the door behind him.

"Hello Professor," a voice called out from the dark room.

Terrified that someone was able to bypass and fool his wards, Filius' dueling instincts instantly took over. Diving to the ground and going into a roll, Filius used his diminutive body size to his advantage by greatly limiting the area the intruder had to hit him with a deadly spell. Coming out of the roll, Filius quickly cast two successive Stunners followed by conjuring a flock of birds to protect him from any potentially incoming spells. The birds, however, proved unnecessary as he saw his first Stunner break a hastily erected shield spell and the second Stunner connect, leaving the intruder unconscious.

Filius' eyes widened when he saw the slumped over body of Harry Potter sitting in a desk. That's impossible! How was he able to get past the wards? Even if he was able to somehow break through them, the detection spell should have shown someone attempting to enter the room!

Gingerly rubbing his temple with his hands, Filius pointed his wand at the young man and said: "Enervate."

Harry immediately woke up and glared accusingly at his teacher. "Why did you attack me?"

Filius had lowered his wand, but did not put it away. There were still many questions that needed to be answered. "Mr. Potter, can you explain to me how you were able to bypass the wards on my door?"

"Wards? What wards? You never put wards on your door," Harry asked, completely surprised.

Filius immediately noticed the absolutely bewildered look on Harry's face and realized that Mr. Potter was either the greatest liar ever or he truthfully had no idea about the wards. Believing that Harry truly didn't perceive the wards, he said: "Harry, I believe we will be having a different kind of lesson today," before standing up and walking over to the door.

Merlin, I'm such an idiot! Of course he would have put wards on his door; there is a blood monster on the loose. Merlin, I need to use my bloody head and just walk around the school like a normal person! Dumbledore and McGonagall suspect I know some way around wards and now Flitwick probably guesses I can do something. Shaking his head slightly at his stupidity, Harry got up and followed the professor to the door.

"Harry, I assume that you just opened the door and walked into the classroom like normal, right?" Flitwick asked.

"Um, yes sir," Harry said cautiously.

Harry watched Flitwick begin to rapidly cast several spells at his door. Flitwick continued to cast spells at the door for several minutes before he finally stopped and put his wand away. Harry heard his teacher mumble "bizarre," "should be impossible," and "all are functioning," before putting his wand down and turning to face him.

"Harry, I'd like for you to try something, alright?" Flitwick asked.

"Err...okay," Harry said.

Flitwick closed the door, waved his wand over it, and then said, "Please try to get into the classroom."

Looking curiously at Flitwick, Harry made to open the door, only to find his hand was unable to grasp the handle. Taking out his wand, Harry pointed it at the door and said, "Alohomora," before trying and failing to open the door again. Harry proceeded to use every

unlocking and anti-sealing spell he knew. Had he been focused on Flitwick, he would have seen his Charms teacher raise an eyebrow at the anti-sealing spell that the prefects had to use to free the second year girls from the snakes in their dormitory. Frustrated by his lack of success, Harry decided on an alternate approach. Stepping to the side of the doorway, Harry made a large circular motion with his wand before calling out “Infodio,” and jabbing his wand at the stone next to the door.

Harry put as much power as he could into the standard household digging charm --typically used for planting flowers-- and sent the spell directly at the solid stone. Upon the spell's impact, a thunderous BOOM was heard and a great deal of dust was blown into Harry and Flitwick's face. After Flitwick cleared away the dust with a flick of his wand, Harry could see a person sized hole in the side of the wall, allowing someone to pass directly into the Charms classroom.

Realizing that this was probably not what Flitwick had in mind when he told Harry to get into the classroom, Harry sheepishly turned back to his professor - only to find Flitwick grinning madly at him.

“Well, I dare say you have found a way past my wards, Harry. Unconventional, yes, but still effective. Tell me, what made you think of the digging charm? Surely you know the blasting spell by now,” Flitwick said as he stepped through the large hole and into the Charms classroom.

Harry followed his teacher into the classroom and muttered an apology when he saw that the chunk of stone he had cut out had pulverized several desks.

Flitwick just waved off the apology and repeated his previous question.

“Well, sir, I honestly wasn't thinking all that clearly. I was rather annoyed at not being able to get past the door,” Harry admitted.

“Yes, you might want to watch that temper, Harry, or someone might accuse you of being a Gryffindor,” Flitwick said cheekily. Seeing that his student did not find that comment the least bit funny, Flitwick

quickly added, "Though your method of getting into the room was cunning enough for the best Slytherin."

"Err, thank you, sir," Harry said.

"I must mention to Minerva the rather odd defect in our school's protection. Honestly, who would have ever thought to dig right through magically enriched stone?" Flitwick laughed as he waved his wand to repair the wall and the broken desks.

"Defect, sir?" Harry asked.

"Oh my, of course, you wouldn't know. Had you tried to blast your way through, the spell would have merely ricocheted or left a spell burn on the wall. I don't think anyone had before thought to overpower a household charm," Flitwick said happily.

"I suppose it does sound sort of ludicrous," Harry admitted.

"Ludicrous? Dear me, boy, not at all, genius is more like it. You have discovered a defect in the castle that no one in a thousand years has. I must say I'm incredibly impressed. I never would have thought you would have managed to get into my room twice!" Flitwick said.

"Err, yeah, about that, sir, I have no idea why I was able to get into the room tonight. I honestly just..." Harry started.

"Relax, Harry. As soon as I saw you struggling with the door, I realized that you getting into the room was obviously an anomaly. Perhaps there was a fluctuation with the ward at the exact moment you tried to enter the room or I simply didn't cast as accurately as I should have with my rush to get to dinner. I probably should have stopped you from trying to get into the room as you continued to struggle, but you were just having such a go at the door that I didn't have the heart to stop you." Flitwick chuckled slightly.

Embarrassed with how he had gotten carried away in his attempt to break the wards around Flitwick's room, Harry said: "Err, right, I guess we wasted most of our time tonight, huh?"

"Yes, I dare say we have run out of time if I'm to get you back to the Slytherin common room by curfew, but I'd hardly call tonight's activities a waste, Harry!" Flitwick said merrily.

"So sir, how would I have gone about getting past those wards on your door?" Harry asked as Flitwick and he began their walk down to the dungeons.

"Well, the most logical start would have been to cast a diagnostic charm to try to identify what wards were present," Flitwick said casually.

"Um, when will I be learning that?" Harry asked.

Flitwick chuckled slightly before replying, "Not for a while, Harry. An introduction to warding isn't usually taught until your seventh year. At the rate you're proceeding, though, perhaps by the time you are in your fourth year, I'll begin to teach you that."

"Oh," Harry said, slightly disappointed, "you said that would be the most logical place to start?"

"Wards are often hidden or concealed, Harry. A diagnostic charm might identify some simple wards or wards that were sloppily constructed, but it's certainly not going to identify everything. To bring down a well-crafted ward set, there are only two real options. The first and most typical method is to cast a spell that will identify if a particular ward is present," Flitwick said.

"Um...I don't understand," Harry admitted.

"There are certain spells that react to certain wards, Harry. For instance, if I'm trying to find out if there is an anti-apparition ward in place over something, I must cast a specific spell that will inform me if an anti-apparition spell is present or not. The spell will only identify whether an anti-apparition ward is present, not any other ward. Do you understand?" Flitwick asked.

"Wait! Do you mean that in order to bring down wards, someone first has to cast spell after spell to find out what wards are present?" Harry exclaimed in disbelief.

"Excellent, you do understand. Yes, one first has to map out each individual ward that is present before they can bring them down," Flitwick said.

"But that... There must be hundreds of different wards!" Harry exclaimed.

"Oh, many more than that, Harry. Wards have been cast for thousands of years and there are literally thousands of different ward detection and collapsing spells that one must learn to be considered a master Curse-Breaker or Ward-Crafter. There are so many spells to learn that it often takes an additional five to seven years of studying wards if one wishes to pursue a career as a Curse-Breaker or Ward-Crafter. Actually, the amount of time it takes to become a great Ward-Crafter is also one of the reasons why your mother was so revered. She had such an unbelievable mind, Harry. She completed her mastery in Ward-Crafting and Charms after a mere two years! Her knowledge of wards and protection spells was rivaled only by Albus and...He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named," Filius said.

Harry greatly enjoyed hearing about his mother's amazing ability with wards, but didn't allow himself to get distracted from the conversation. "You said there were two ways to bring down wards, sir? Surely there must be an easier way."

Filius' face darkened momentarily before saying, "Easier, yes, possible for many to accomplish, no."

Seeing his teacher was not prepared to elaborate, Harry hesitantly asked, "What is the other way, sir?"

"Power," Flitwick whispered just loudly enough for Harry to hear. "A ward is only as strong as the person or group of people who cast it. A significantly powerful person or group of people can overload the magic within the warding spells, canceling them out. This is the reason why Hogwarts' wards are so powerful. The founders were

exceptionally powerful wizards and witches, and the spells they cast over the school are incredibly strong; however, every headmaster and headmistress that has ever served at Hogwarts has also added to the wards, increasing the school's protection. The same is true of the Ministry of Magic, only I believe it is the Unspeakables who maintain the wards there."

"Unspeakables?" Harry asked.

"The Department of Mysteries, Harry. It is only rumored, of course, but the up-keeping of the wards at the ministry is believed to be one of their many duties," Flitwick said.

"Sir, why were you...hesitant to tell me this?" Harry asked curiously.

Flitwick sighed deeply before saying. "Harry...did you never wonder why He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named was so feared? Did you never wonder why people are even to this day so terrified to speak his name?"

"I just assumed that it was because of his pow..." Harry's eyes suddenly widened as realization struck. "Do you mean that he was able to bring down wards?"

Flitwick adopted a pained look as he nodded his head. "Yes, He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named was famous for his ability to overpower almost any ward. The ministry and Hogwarts were among the few wards capable of keeping him out. For families who stood against him, it was a constant threat to be sitting at home eating dinner and the next minute facing down invading Death Eaters."

Flitwick stopped talking for a moment and Harry thought he saw a tear fall down his professor's face. "Harry, I am not an arrogant man and I can honestly say that I am a powerful wizard...yet I have seen wards that I cast fall within minutes under the onslaught of He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named's power. The only single person who I believe was at all capable of keeping him out was Dumbledore. Now, I know you have problems with the headmaster, Harry, but you must understand that during the war, Albus saved countless lives by warding homes free of charge. He warded all of Hogsmeade after a

Death Eater attack almost destroyed the village in 1975, and he and a group of people including your mother personally warded St. Mungos after He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named attacked it in 1980.”

Realizing how uncomfortable the conversation was making his professor, Harry was grateful that they soon reached the entrance to the Slytherin common room. The two said a quick goodbye before Harry mumbled “Runespoor” and stepped inside.

Harry had walked not two feet into the common room before Montague and Derrik were bearing down on him.

”Potter! Your snake has gone insane! Not even your elf can get near it,” Derrik said frantically.

Rubbing his head in irritation, Harry asked, “Where is he?”

Montague just pointed to a couch by the fire and Harry quickly walked over and asked, ‘What'sss wrong?’

‘Massster, you’ve returned! I’ve tried to tell the elf and thessse disssgusssting, ssspeechlesssss, monkeysss, but they can’t ssspeak!’ Salazar hissed excitedly.

‘What do you mean? What isss it?’ Harry asked.

‘There is a ssscent, Massster. It isss faint, but it isss there!’ Salazar replied.

‘What do you mean there isss a ssscent? Of coursse there isss a ssscent, I’m sssure there are hundredsss of ssscents at thisss sssschool,’ Harry said.

“NO!” Salazar snapped impatiently. ‘Thisss isss not a human ssscent. There isss sssomething elssse. Sssomething I can not place. It isss like a ssserpent, but not quite,’ Salazar hissed.

Harry immediately understood what his familiar was saying and his face lit up in glee. ‘Can you find it? Can you somehow follow this sssmell?’

'Perhapsss,' Salazar said hesitantly, 'It will be difficult ass the ssscent isss in many placesss and isss not fresssh. If the creature returnsss and I am given a fresssh ssscent, I can track it.'

Harry continued to hiss back and forth with his familiar long into the night. He never noticed his classmates sitting further and further away from him as they continued to talk.

Tuesday, April 27th, Great Hall.

Harry Potter sat at the far end of the Slytherin table with Draco and Blaise.

"I hate Tuesdays," Draco grumbled, obviously tired from the previous night's exploration of the castle. Harry and Draco had been following up on places Salazar had said there was a powerful scent of the creature; however, they had yet to find anything.

"We know, Draco. We know," Blaise said simply.

"Draco, did Professor Snape tell you when the potion to wake Tonks and Ginny up would be ready?" Harry asked.

"He said that it looks like the start of May, but not sooner," Draco said.

"That..." Blaise said.

"Mr. Potter, you will come with me," a commanding voice said.

Harry turned around and saw Professors McGonagall and Snape looking down at him.

"Yes, sir," Harry said as he tried to fight down the sudden desire to slash Snape's throat with his nonexistent claws.

McGonagall and Snape led Harry to the now headmistress' office.

"Dumbledore," McGonagall said, causing the imitation gargoyle to get up and move out of the way.

Harry felt his gargoyles snort in disgust at the pathetic animated statue as he followed McGonagall and Snape up the spiral staircase and into McGonagall's new office.

"Have a seat, Mr. Potter," McGonagall said.

Harry took the offered seat and waited for either McGonagall or Snape to start speaking. When neither did, Harry started to get annoyed. He was about to say something when the fire flared green, indicating an incoming floo traveler, and Lucius stepped into the office.

"Harry," Lucius said congenially as he took a seat.

"Now that we are all here, we can begin," McGonagall said.

"Begin what, exactly?" Harry asked, confused.

"Mr. Potter, due to excessive absences and detentions not serving their purpose, Professor Snape and I have no choice but to suspend you from Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry," McGonagall said.

"WHAT!" Harry roared as he jumped up.

"Harry, sit down," Lucius said calmly.

"I can't be suspended," Harry said sharply.

McGonagall, Snape, and Lucius shared a look with each other before McGonagall said: "And why, Mr. Potter, is it so important that you remain at Hogwarts? Practically every teacher with the exception of Filius, Severus, and myself have complained about your excessive absences over the last three weeks. We tried to give you some leeway as your friend was attacked, but others have dealt with attacks this year, as well."

"Binns complained about me?" Harry asked sarcastically.

McGonagall pursed her lips before replying, "Professor Binns indicated that you have had frequent and necessary meetings with your Goblin financial advisor; however, seeing as you have not requested to leave the castle to meet with said advisor, that indicates either a lie or your illegally leaving school without permission. Dare I ask which one, Mr. Potter?"

Seeing that this was not the time to antagonize McGonagall, Harry decided to remain silent.

"Harry, what exactly have you been doing the last three weeks?" Lucius asked.

Harry looked at Lucius, but remained silent, which only seemed to infuriate Snape.

"I'd watch myself, Potter. Lucius is here representing the Board of Governors to see if expulsion is merited," Snape sneered.

Harry glared at Snape with undisguised loathing before turning to Lucius and McGonagall and saying: "You want to suspend me."

"Unless you can provide us with an adequate reason to not do so," McGonagall said compassionately.

Harry weighed his options quickly. I can't find the bloody chamber if I'm not in the school, so I need to tell them something. If I tell them I'm looking for the Chamber, though, how will they respond? McGonagall might be swayed if I had made some progress, but Snape probably wouldn't care at all. If they are serious about suspending me, then I'm going to need to have some results. I guess I could lie a little, tell them I'm close. Yes, that might be the only way. "I've been searching for the Chamber of Secrets," Harry admitted.

"Potter, your arrogance knows no bounds," Snape spat viciously.

"Excuse me?" Harry growled in annoyance.

"Mr. Potter, what possessed you to think that you could find the Chamber of Secrets when everyone else could not?" McGonagall demanded.

"Who said I didn't find it?" Harry shot back.

The effect of Harry's words was instantaneous. Snape's eyes widened in disbelief, McGonagall's jaw literally hit the floor, and Lucius looked pensive.

"You mean to tell us that you found the Chamber of Secrets?" McGonagall asked slowly.

"No, but I'm closer than any of you ever could be," Harry said.

"Lies. The boy is lying through his teeth in order to stave off suspension," Snape spat.

"And if he is not?" Lucius said diplomatically.

"Mr. Potter, what do you mean you are close to finding it?" McGonagall asked.

"Salazar told me that there is a smell around the school. Something that wasn't here last year, and isn't human. He believes it to be the creature that is attacking everyone," Harry said.

"Let's say that we believe this tall tale. That does not excuse you from class! Surely your snake can follow the trail and report back to you," Snape snarled.

"The trail dead ends in certain places, professor. It runs into a wall and disappears, only to reappear on another side of the school. I believe that there are a series of secret passages that the creature might be using," Harry said, fighting the urge to rip out Snape's jugular.

"Very well, Harry. We have heard your reason for missing classes and we will discuss it. You will go to your classes today and we will give you our decision later tonight," Lucius said.

Harry nodded his head and quickly left the office.

"Surely you don't believe the boy, Minerva," Snape said as soon as the door was closed.

"I have no reason not to, Severus. Truthfully, I think it makes sense. Mr. Potter is too good of a student to just ignore his classes," McGonagall said.

"I don't believe his excuse for a moment. I think Potter is using his friends' hospitalization to get out of going to classes. It's not like we can really even test his excuse for missing the classes. I can't give Veritaserum to a snake!" Snape spat.

"While Harry was misguided, I believe his heart was in the right place, Severus. As such, the Board will not sign off on expelling Mr. Potter," Lucius said nonchalantly.

Snape glared at Lucius for a moment before saying: "Please, like you would ever allow Potter to be expelled, Lucius. The only reason you are even here is to make sure I know not to push for expulsion."

Lucius simply smirked. "I simply reminded you, old friend, that with a temporary headmistress, the Board of Governors has the final say over all expulsions."

"Gentlemen, the issue is Mr. Potter's suspension, not expulsion," McGonagall said, trying to bring the group back on topic.

"Since you are a temporary headmistress, Minerva, the right of suspending a student falls to his head of house," Snape deadpanned before smirking slightly. "As Mr. Potter's head of house, it is my right to suspend him if I believe the student's actions warrant it, and Mr. Potter's do."

McGonagall sighed deeply. "Severus, perhaps detention for the rest of the year would be more appropriate."

"No, Minerva. My student. My decision. Potter will be suspended," Snape demanded.

"Very well," Minerva said with a sigh, "we will tell him after dinner tonight."

"I will have a Portkey ready to take him to Malfoy Manor," Lucius said as he stood up and left the office through the floo.

"Severus, as you also know, it is up to you to allow Mr. Potter to take his end of year exams at the ministry so he doesn't have to repeat this year. Will you please at least allow Mr. Potter that?" McGonagall asked.

"Of course," Snape said dismissively, "do you honestly think I want to spend an extra year with Potter? Now, is that all?"

"Yes Severus, you may leave," McGonagall said tiredly.

Snape simply nodded his head, opened the door, and walked down the spiral staircase with a smile on his face. He was so happy with the thought of not seeing Potter for the rest of the year that he didn't notice a large shadow follow him down the stairs.

Harry fell back into the shadows of the stairway when Snape opened the door. He followed the greasy-haired professor down the stairs and out of the office. As soon as Snape turned the corner and he was alone in the hallway, Harry dropped out of the shadow realm and barked: "Andi!"

The little elf appeared a moment later.

"Yes, Harry Potter, sir?" Andi said.

"I'm being suspended from Hogwarts. I need you to pack up all my belongings and have them taken to Malfoy Manor. When you are done with that, find Salazar and bring him to me. We have until after dinner to find the Chamber of Secrets."

Andi quickly nodded her head and disappeared.

As soon as Andi was gone, Harry took off running for the Great Hall. When he opened the doors, he was relieved to see that both Draco and Blaise were still at the Slytherin table, eating. He walked right up to them and said: "Get up, I need to tell you something."

"Come on, Harry, just let me finish my breakfast," Draco grumbled.

"Yeah, Harry, Herbology doesn't start for another 30 minutes," Blaise said.

"Now!" Harry growled. The gargoyle, emphasizing his demand, magically dropped his voice several levels making it sound inhuman.

Blaise and Draco shared a look before quickly packing up their things and following Harry out of the Great Hall.

Harry found a nearby unused classroom and walked inside. After putting up several locking and silencing charms, Harry turned to his friends and said: "I'm being suspended."

"WHAT!" Draco and Blaise gasped in unison.

"I'm being suspended," Harry said again.

"Why?" Draco asked in shock.

"Because Snape hates me," Harry said, the gargoyle sending him images of Snape's decapitation.

"Harry, seriously, why are you being suspended?" Blaise asked.

"Because of the amount of time I've missed from class," Harry said simply.

"I told you that was a stupid idea!" Draco barked.

"How long are you suspended for?" Blaise asked.

"The rest of the year," Harry said.

"I don't believe this," Blaise said, shaking his head.

"Me neither. McGonagall wanted to give me detention for the rest of the year, but Snape wanted me suspended," Harry said in annoyance.

"I can't believe he would do that," Draco said in shock.

"Yeah, well, if it wasn't for your dad reminding him that with a temporary headmistress all expulsions go through the Board of Governors, he probably would have pushed for me to be expelled," Harry said darkly.

"No way. I know he doesn't really like you or anything, but he wouldn't try to expel you," Draco said adamantly.

"Get over it, Draco. Snape hates me," Harry snarled as Andi appeared next to him holding Salazar.

"Thank you, Andi," Harry said as he took Salazar from her.

"Does Master Harry require anything else?" Andi asked.

"Yes, do your best in the next," Harry checked his watch, "ten hours to find the Chamber of Secrets."

"Yes Master," Andi said dutifully as she disappeared.

"Ten hours?" Blaise asked.

"Yes, I'm supposed to be suspended after dinner tonight. So that gives me about ten hours to find the chamber," Harry said.

"Harry, there is absolutely no way you'll find it in ten hours," Draco said.

"Maybe. I need to talk to Salazar," Harry said.

'What isss it? Why did the elf bother me?' Salazar asked.

'I'm being forced to leave Hogwartsss in ten hours. How goesss your sssearch?' Harry asked quickly.

'It isss improving, Massster. A human isss sssspreading the sssmell,' Salazar said.

'I thought you sssaid the sssmell was not human?' Harry asked.

'No Massster, the ssmell isss not human, but a human isss interacting with whatever creature hasss the sssmell,' Salazar said.

'How do you know thisss?' Harry asked.

'The sssmell isss all over the booksss in the library. Magical creauresss would not read human booksss,' Salazar hissed excitedly.

'Can you find thisss human?' Harry asked.

'Yesss, eventually I could, but I do not know if I will be able to in ssso little time,' Salazar said.

"Damn it!" Harry said as he angrily drew his wand and sent a massive fireball followed by a blasting hex at a nearby desk, destroying it instantly.

"Merlin, Harry, calm down! What did Salazar say?" Draco asked concerned.

"Do you remember how I told you that he was following the creature's scent?" Harry asked.

When Draco and Blaise nodded their heads, Harry said, "Well, Salazar says that a human is spreading the smell around the school. Whoever is carrying the smell is the person controlling the creature."

"That's great news!" Blaise said excitedly.

"No, it's not. Salazar doubts he'll be able to find out who it is in ten hours," Harry said.

"So couldn't you leave him and he could tell us?" Draco asked.

"Do you speak Parseltongue, Draco?" Harry asked as if talking to a two year old.

"Um, no," Draco said.

"Neither does anyone else in the bloody school. How exactly is Salazar supposed to tell you who it is?" Harry asked.

'Why do you keep sssaying my name!' Salazar demanded.

'Sssorry, I was just explaining the sssituation to them. Sssalazar, do your bessst to find out who the persssoon ssspreading the sssmell iss,' Harry hissed as he put Salazar on the ground and opened the door for him to leave.

"What did you just tell him?" Blaise asked.

"What do you think I told him!" Harry snapped out while the windows in the room started to shake and crack.

"Calm down, Harry, I was just asking," Blaise said calmly.

Harry took a moment to compose himself. It wouldn't do to get worked up. The last time he lost control of his magic, he practically destroyed the hospital wing.

"So, I take it you won't be coming to Herbology or Defense," Draco said.

"No, not likely. You feel like hunting for the Chamber with me?" Harry asked.

"No, I would rather go spend time with Granger and Lockhart," Draco drawled sarcastically.

"I'll take that as a yes," Harry said shortly. "How about you, Blaise?"

Blaise was slightly shocked at being finally invited to directly look for the Chamber but he hid his surprise and simply rolled his eyes before saying: "I guess I can kiss my perfect attendance mark goodbye."

Lunch, Great Hall, Hogwarts

A very dejected Harry, Draco, and Blaise sat down for lunch in the Great Hall. They had searched for almost three hours and found absolutely nothing of any value.

"Harry, I don't want to sound...well, you know, bleak, but I don't think we're going to find it," Draco said.

Harry simply hung his head. "I know it's a long shot, but we've still got some time left."

"Harry...", Blaise started, only to be cut off by a very angry Minerva McGonagall.

"MISTER POTTER! Professor Sprout tells me that you missed her Herbology class this morning!" McGonagall said sharply.

"Yes ma'am," Harry replied, not sounding sorry at all.

"YES MA'AM! YES MA'AM! That's your response!" McGonagall said loudly, drawing the attention of the entire Great Hall.

"I believe we'll speak about this after dinner, won't we, ma'am." Harry said emotionlessly, locking eyes with McGonagall.

"Yes, we shall, Mr. Potter," McGonagall said, her anger accenting her Scottish brogue.

"Damn Harry, I don't want to be you, later," Draco said.

"What else could she do to me, Draco? Your father won't let her expel me, and I'm already being suspended," Harry grumbled.

"Good point," Blaise said.

"So where are you going to look next?" Draco asked.

"I don't know. I just hope Salazar is having more luck than we are," Harry said.

"Harry, if you don't know where to look, why don't you go to class?" Blaise asked.

"Are you high, Blaise? Why would I go to Lockhart's class? I would rather have tea with Snape!" Harry spat.

"Harry, Blaise has a point. You're being suspended later tonight. You could do whatever you wanted during Lockhart's class, and he couldn't punish you," Draco said with a malicious smirk.

"But what about the Cham....," Harry said.

"You said it yourself, Harry, you have no idea where to look. Why don't you just come to class with us?" Blaise said as he got up and collected his books.

"Fine, I guess I should say goodbye to that idiot," Harry said as a smile tugged at the edges of his lips while the gargoyle flashed him an image of Lockhart being thrown across the room into one of his mirrors.

## Defense Against the Dark Arts Classroom, Hogwarts

Harry took a seat in the back of the classroom with Draco and Blaise. A few minutes later the rest of Slytherin and Gryffindor made their way into the classroom.

"Oy, everyone look who finally decided to come to class," Ron said loudly, earning a laugh from the Gryffindors.

"I'm glad you can joke while your sister is petrified in the hospital wing, Weasley. I guess that just proves how little you actually care. I wonder what Ginny will say after she wakes up?" Draco said casually, causing Ron to turn red and glare at Draco.

"Now settle down, settle down," Lockhart said as he entered the classroom. "Ah Mr. Potter! I'm glad you could join us today. Now, since I'm sure you've been keeping up with your reading outside of class, could you please tell us how I stopped the Yorkshire Yeti?" Lockhart asked.

"You didn't. You just wrote you did in a book," Harry said clearly so the entire class could hear.

Lockhart shot Harry a very annoyed glare before he said, "Really, Mr. Potter, there is no need to be jealous of my numerous accomplishments. I'm sure someday you'll have just as many as myself," Lockhart said with an award winning smile.

"You mean I'll get to lie to the entire wizarding world through publication as well? Oh wow, what a marvelous accomplishment," Harry said sarcastically.

"Mr. Potter. I am not a fraud. Everything in my books is absolutely true," Lockhart said sharply.

"Really? Then why are you such a pathetic wizard?" Harry asked causing several people to gasp.

"MR. POTTER, DETENTION FOR ONE WEEK," Lockhart raged.

"How about this. I'll sign all your fan mail for two weeks if you can actually perform the spell that destroys Dementors like you claimed to have created," Harry said.

"Mr. Potter, if you had read Defeating the Darkness, you would have known that the spell can only be done in the presence of a Dementor," Lockhart said.

"How very convenient for you that they are all guarding Azkaban. Also, that raises the question of where exactly you ran into a rogue Dementor," Harry said.

"That's it! Get out of my classroom, Mr. Potter. This entire year you have been nothing but disrespectful to me," Lockhart said haughtily as he pointed to the door.

"This isn't a classroom. You have to teach for this to be considered a classroom," Harry shot back when he realized Lockhart was actually serious.

"OUT! GET OUT!" Lockhart said as his entire body started to turn purple with rage.

"What are you going to do if I say no, Lockhart? Merlin knows you couldn't beat me in a duel," Harry said vindictively.

"GET OUT! GET OUT! GET OUT! GET OUT!" Lockhart said as he started to wave his wand around wildly.

"Ha, you really are pathetic," Harry said as he gathered his things and started to walk out of the classroom. Before he got to the door though, he stopped, turned around, and said, "I hope you all realize that you have learned absolutely nothing in this idiot's class all year. Just in case you don't think that's true, ask yourself if knowing Gilderoy Lockhart's favorite colour will ever appear on your OWL exam," Harry said as he turned to leave.

"Stupefy!" Lockhart cried as soon as Harry's back was turned.

Harry heard Lockhart's spell and instinctively dropped to the floor, causing the spell fly over his head. The gargoyle inside of him let loose a war cry and Harry quickly turned around, pointed his wand at Lockhart and bellowed: "REDUCTO!"

Harry's voice wasn't the only one to say a spell, though. As soon as Lockhart had fired his curse, Draco and Blaise sent off a stream of jinxes, hexes, and curses at the teacher. By the time Harry's Reducto reached Lockhart, the incompetent Defense teacher already had hex marks all over his head, boils appearing on his arms, and a large gash across his face. When Harry's Reducto struck Lockhart in the arm, everyone heard a loud crack followed by Lockhart screaming out in pain before he passed out.

Harry, Draco, and Blaise kept their wands drawn on Lockhart, even though he looked to be unconscious on the floor. Harry was fighting the urge to use a cutting curse to chop off the vain teacher's nose when Weasley said, "YOU'VE DONE IT NOW, POTTER! YOU CAN'T JUST ATTACK A TEACHER! YOU'LL BE EXPELLED FOR SURE!"

"I highly doubt I'll be expelled. Suspended most definitely, expelled no. Crabbe, Goyle could you take this idiot to Madam Pomfrey? Nott, you go with them and explain what happened," Harry said calmly as the three boys nodded their heads and did what they were told without a word.

"How can you be so calm? You just attacked a teacher," Pavarti Patil said in complete horror.

"I didn't attack that git. He's the one who fired a stunning spell at my back," Harry declared.

"Harry, I think you should probably get to the Slytherin common room. Draco and I will tell McGonagall and Snape what happened," Blaise said.

"Like hell you will. I'm going to tell McGonagall what happened!" Ron said standing up.

"Stupefy!" Draco barked.

The stunning spell struck Ron in the head, dropping him to the ground, unconscious.

"Anyone else feel like volunteering to go to McGonagall?" Draco demanded.

When all the Gryffindors shook their head, Draco smirked. "Pity Granger isn't here; I would have loved to curse her along with Weasley."

"I'm sure, Draco. Now, I've got to go. Good luck to you two," Harry said as he left the room and headed for the Slytherin common room.

## Slytherin Common Room, Hogwarts

Harry had been sitting in the Slytherin common room for the last few hours. He had given Andi his list of places to check around Hogwarts for the Chamber of Secrets, but the elf had returned wailing about how she had failed her master. As the clock ticked closer and closer to seven o'clock, Harry realized that he had failed to find the Chamber of Secrets, and he was now going to be suspended.

The sound of the common room entrance opening snapped Harry out of his rather depressing thoughts. He raised his head to see who had come in and was surprised to see everyone in Slytherin house quickly filing into the common room. Harry's curiosity got the better of him and he began looking for Blaise and Draco to find out what was going on.

"Harry!" a voice called out.

Harry turned around to see Blaise and Draco walking towards him.

"Hey, what's going on? Why is everyone not at dinner?" Harry asked.

"We were just on our way there when Snape stopped us and said to come to the common room for an announcement," Blaise said.

"How did Snape and McGonagall take the Lockhart thing?" Harry asked.

"Well, McGonagall was really mad, but she calmed down when I told her that it was Lockhart who sent the first spell," Blaise said.

"Snape didn't care," Draco said offhandedly.

"What do you mean he didn't care?" Harry asked astonished.

"He didn't care. I told him Blaise, you, and I cursed Lockhart when he attacked you from behind, and he just asked some basic questions before he told me that we wouldn't be punished for it," Draco said.

"Figures, I'm already getting suspended, and he would never do something to get you in trouble," Harry muttered.

"Harry, I'm sorry that you couldn't find the Chamber," Draco said, shifting the topic.

Harry just nodded his head and went back to where he was sitting.

"What are you going to do for the next couple of weeks?" Blaise asked.

"I don't really know. I guess it won't be too bad. I'll be at Malfoy Manor, and I'll probably be allowed to do magic to study for my exams," Harry said.

"Yeah, at least you won't have to go back to the Dursleys," Draco said

"Yeah, that'll be nice. Draco, will you do me a favor?" Harry said.

"Sure, mate," Draco said.

"Well, when Tonks wakes up...will you tell her I'm sorry?" Harry said quietly.

"Yeah, I'll tell her, but I don't think you have anything to be sorry for, Harry," Draco said strongly.

Harry was about to argue against that when the door to the common room opened and a pale Severus Snape entered. "Everyone is to gather their things as soon as possible. Hogwarts will be closing for the foreseeable future," Snape said.

As soon as Snape finished talking, everyone jumped up and started demanding an explanation.

"BE QUIET!" Snape said forcefully, causing all the Slytherins to stop talking. "The heir of Slytherin has attacked again and taken a student into the Chamber of Secrets."

No one made a sound for a good minute as every Slytherin started to look for their friends and dorm mates just to make sure it wasn't them. Finally someone asked: "Who? Who was taken?"

"A Gryffindor second year, that is all I am allowed to say right now," Snape said.

"Was it a muggleborn?" Goyle asked stupidly.

"Not that it really matters at this point, Mr. Goyle, but yes, it was," Snape said.

Harry's mind started to race when Snape said it was a Gryffindor muggleborn. There were only two Gryffindor second year muggleborns, Thomas and Granger. Looking over at Draco and Blaise, Harry could tell that they were thinking the exact same thing. Blaise caught Harry's eye before he asked: "Was it a boy or a girl?"

Snape eyed Blaise for a good minute while he seemed to debate whether telling them was alright or not. Eventually Snape quietly said: "A girl."

"Merlin, the heir got Grang...", Draco said.

"Mr. Malfoy keep your theories about who was taken to yourself, please," Snape said sharply, causing Draco to fall silent.

"As I said, you will all be leaving tomorrow morning on the Hogwarts express, which will arrive promptly at ten. I expect you all to pack your belongings now to insure that you have everything. You will receive a letter by the middle of June, which will alert you to whether Hogwarts will reopen next year," Snape said.

"You mean the school might permanently close down?" a shocked Slytherin first year asked.

"A girl is presumed dead, Ms. Creed. If we are unable to protect our students, of course the school will be shut down," Snape barked.

"But it was only a mudblood," a burly sixth year said.

Harry thought he saw a look of annoyance flash on Snape's face for a second before the Potions professor's face became an unreadable mask. "Be that as it may, Mr. Nottingham, the school's Board of Governors has seen fit to close the school. The fact that a pureblood witch from the heir's house was also attacked should tell you that blood purity seems not to matter as legend suggested," Snape said.

"But she was a blood traitor!" Pansy Parkinson said loudly.

Before Snape could reprimand her, several spells had already struck Pansy, throwing her into a group of fourth years.

"Potter, Malfoy, Zabini, lower your wands this instant!" Snape demanded.

"Sorry, sir," Draco said, not sounding at all apologetic.

Snape just eyed his godson for a moment before turning on Harry. "Mr. Potter, don't think that the school closing will get your suspension taken off the record. I have already informed Minerva that your suspension is still active. You will accompany me now to her office where you will take a Portkey off school grounds," Snape said as several Slytherins began quietly discussing why Harry Potter would be getting suspended.

Harry just glared at Snape before slowly nodding his head. "Well, I guess I'll see you tomorrow at Kings Cross, Draco."

"Yeah, see you tomorrow, Harry," Draco said as they shook hands.

"Bye Harry," Blaise said.

"Bye Blaise," Harry said as he followed Snape out of the Slytherin common room.

As soon as the wall sealing the common room had closed, Snape and Harry started to walk to the headmistress' office. For a while they didn't speak, but Snape decided he had to gloat just a little at Harry's

suspension. "You know every employer in the Wizarding world is going to know that you were suspended, Potter," Snape said viciously.

The gargoyle's desire to tear Snape apart was growing with every insult. Harry wouldn't give Snape the satisfaction of seeing him get upset, though. Even trying to tune out Snape, Harry couldn't help but catch parts of the surely Potions Master's comments.

"Arrogant just like your father..."

"Thought you could find the Chamber of Secrets when Dumbledore couldn't..."

"Inflated sense of self importance..."

"Trust me, my snake is following the trail..."

Harry suddenly stopped walking. Snape's last comment had caused his mind to go into overdrive. Salazar! Salazar said he could follow the trail if it was fresh. The person who kidnapped Granger would have taken her directly to the Chamber of Secrets! Salazar could follow the fresh smell and take me right to the person responsible for this! But how do I get away from Snape? There is no way he'll let me go do this.

An idea slowly developed in Harry's head and a vindictive smile crossed his face. He made sure that his Occlumency was at full strength before he quickly caught back up to Snape, who was still obviously insulting Harry and his parents. Harry subtly fell a step behind Snape and withdrew his wand.

"Stupefy," Harry practically whispered.

The red beam of light shot out of Harry's wand and struck Snape in the back, rendering him unconscious. Standing over Snape's unconscious form, Harry slowly raised his wand to curse the man again when he reluctantly realized that he didn't have a lot of time. "Andi," Harry called out.

The little elf appeared with a pop and ignored Snape's unconscious body.

"Andi, get Salazar, quickly," Harry commanded as the gargoyle protested him leaving Snape virtually unharmed.

Andi nodded vigorously before reappearing a moment later with an excited Salazar.

'Massster, I found it. I found it,' Salazar gloated.

Harry's eyes widened. 'You found the entrance to the Chamber of Sssecretsss?' Harry asked quickly.

'Yess, I found the girl who sssmellsss like a ssserpent and followed her!' Salazar proclaimed.

Harry's mind was again racing. GIRL! A girl is the heir of Slytherin! 'Where, Sssalazar? Where isss the entrance to the Chamber?' Harry demanded.

'I ssshall ssshow you,' Salazar said.

Harry was about to tell Salazar that he could carry him when Salazar started moving faster than Harry ever thought possible. His familiar was halfway down the corridor before Harry started to race after him.

Harry followed Salazar down several corridors, through a few secret passage ways, and was starting to tire from chasing after his familiar. Salazar had just rounded another corner when Harry felt an arm reach out and try to grab him from behind. While the attacker was unsuccessful at grabbing him, Harry was knocked off balance and fell to the stone floor.

"Well, well, well, Mr. Potter what are you doing out right now? Surely you know that the school is being closed?"

Harry saw red; he would recognize that voice anywhere. Rubbing his now bruised jaw, Harry stood up and turned to face the most incompetent person he had ever met. "What do you want, Lockhart? I

see you got your arm fixed,” Harry said cruelly as the gargoyle inside him demanded a swift, but painful death for Lockhart.

“I’ve had to listen to you claim that I am a fraud all year. It’s about time you recognize that I have some very impressive talents,” Lockhart said darkly.

Harry reached down to grab his wand when he realized that he didn’t have it. Looking over his shoulder, he saw that it was some twenty feet away. Damn, must have dropped it when the git knocked me over.

“Well, it looks like the Boy-Who-Lived needs to learn a lesson on proper wand protection. I, of course, learned that at my previous job,” Lockhart said maliciously.

“Oh, what would that be, Lockhart? Did trolls test their clubs on your head?” Harry said menacingly.

Lockhart’s grin disappeared and was replaced with a sneer that was Snape-worthy. “No, you little shit. I was a Ministry Obliviator. One of the best, not that many could tell you that after I erased the memory of most of the department when I decided to leave! Now, I think you are about to change your tune on my books, boy,” Lockhart said with a snarl.

”Are you daft, man? You’re a fraud, I’m not going to be changing anything!” Harry spat at the teacher.

“You won’t have a choice! Oblivi-ahhhhh!!” Lockhart yelled, dropping his wand and crying out in pain.

It took Harry a moment to realize why Lockhart was screaming, but then he saw the black serpent with its fangs imbedded deep in Lockhart’s leg. Harry watched as Salazar withdrew his fangs only to bite the incompetent Defense teacher again, and again. This caused Lockhart to scream in agony and make a desperate attempt to slap the snake away. Not to be outdone by his familiar, Harry quickly picked up his wand and growled out: “Reducto.” The blasting hex

struck Lockhart directly in the sternum and sent him flying into a wall where he fell to ground, unconscious.

'Massster, are you alright?' Salazar hissed as his slithered away from Lockhart's crumbled form.

'Yesss, I'm fine, thankssss to you, my friend. How long do you think it will take him to wake up?' Harry asked.

'He will not,' Salazar hissed happily.

It took Harry a moment to understand exactly what Salazar had just said, but when he did, his eyes widened. 'Merlin, I have to hide hisss body, Sssalazar, we will get in trouble for killing him,' Harry said frantically, the gargoyle sending him feelings of pride and triumph the only thing keeping him from full hysterics.

'Take him with usss. The chamber isss around the next corner,' Salazar instructed.

Harry nodded his head, grabbed his wand, and levitated Lockhart's body behind him as he followed Salazar around the corner and through a door. His eyes widened in shock when he realized he had just entered a girl's bathroom.

"What? The entrance to the Chamber of Secrets is in a girl's bathroom?" Harry asked in shock.

"Oooooo, another visitor," an excited voice squealed.

Harry quickly turned around and found himself face to face with the ghost of a rather ugly young girl.

"Who are you?" Harry asked.

The ghost's eyes welled with tears before she started to cry. "No one ever knows poor Myrtle. No one cares," the ghost cried as she flew out of the bathroom.

"That had to be Moaning Myrtle," Harry said in understanding.

'Massster, come here. The entrance isss here,' Salazar called out.

Harry quickly located Salazar and floated Lockhart behind him.

'How isss thisss the entrance?' Harry asked looking at the sink.

'Lift me up,' Salazar commanded.

Harry quickly obeyed and lifted his familiar up onto the sink. 'You must command the serpent on the sink to open the chamber,' Salazar said.

Harry nodded his head and hissed: 'Open.'

At first, Harry thought it hadn't worked, but a moment later he watched as the wall started to shake before it slowly moved aside, exposing a large hole, which seemed to descend into the bowels of Hogwarts. Harry quickly levitated Lockhart's body over the hole and dropped him.

After Harry didn't hear a loud thump or crash, he figured it was safe to go inside. Once he and Salazar entered the hole, Harry shifted them both into the Shadow Realm and followed the passage downward. When Harry reached the bottom of the passage, he returned to his physical body.

"Lumos," Harry said, taking out his wand.

The lighting spell quickly lit up the room and Harry immediately noticed Lockhart's body lying next to a massive snake skin and a cluster of bones. When he saw the snake skin, Harry's face paled dramatically. What the bloody hell! How big of a snake is this thing?

As if sensing Harry's distress, Salazar spoke up. 'Massster, it'sss an abomination! We must kill the filthy creature! The abomination must die!' Salazar hissed frantically.

'What the hell are you talking about?' Harry demanded.

'The creature, it isss a Bassilisssk! The filthy creature is not fit to be called a ssserpent!' Salazar hissed angrily.

'What isss a Basssilisssk?' Harry demanded.

'It isss an abomination of the ssserpent ssspeciesss. Long ago a ssspeaker tried to create a powerful ssserpent that only he could control. The result wasss the abomination. A creature of great length and power, but mindlesssss and mad. The ssspeaker was only interesssted in making a powerful creature, and he created a ssserpent whose gaze could kill and whose venom was deadly,' Salazar said, disgust dripping off every word.

'How am I suppose to fight something I can't look at?' Harry asked.

'No massster, itsss gaze will not harm a ssspeaker,' Salazar hissed.

'How big isss thisss thing?' Harry asked.

'I do not know. I have never sssseen sssuch a creature before, but they are rumored to be large.' Salazar replied angrily.

'How am I sssuppossed to kill it?' Harry asked again.

'Massster, you are the heir of Ssslytherin. If this is truly your ancestor'sss Basssilisssk, it will follow your commandsss without question. Remember, the creature isss practically mindlesssss,' Salazar replied.

'What do you mean by practically mindless?' Harry asked.

'It will follow any command given to it by a ssspeaker as long ass it doesss not contradict itsss creator'sss original commandsss,' Salazar said.

Harry felt as if a great weight had just been lifted off his shoulders. Thank Merlin. Fighting that thing would have been...would have been...unpleasant.

Relieved that he wouldn't be fighting a massive snake, Harry quickly picked up his familiar, wrapped him around his shoulders, and walked to the other end of the long hallway. When he reached a dead end, Salazar raised his head and said: 'Open up.'

The two snakes that were on the door just seemed to look at Salazar before saying: 'Only a speaker can command us.'

Taking that as his cue, Harry said: 'Open up.'

The two snakes immediately complied and a low grinding sound signaled the door being unlocked. When the door swung open, Harry slowly walked inside. The first thing Harry noticed was that unlike the last room, this one was very well lit with hundreds of torches. The second thing was the incredibly large statues that lined the room. Harry slowly took in the massive size of the room and noticed that it was several times larger than the Great Hall.

'Massster, who isss that?' Salazar hissed.

Salazar's voice caused Harry to remember why he was here. It didn't take long for Harry to find out who Salazar was talking about. At the far end of the hallway was an unconscious Hermione Granger laying on the floor, and a boy Harry had never seen before was standing over her. Harry quickly took out his wand and slowly approached the pair.

As Harry got closer, he noticed that the boy had dark hair, brown eyes, and was wearing Slytherin robes with a prefect badge. This caused Harry to tighten the grip on his wand. Harry didn't know all the boys in Slytherin house, but he certainly knew the prefects and this boy wasn't one of them. Realizing that this was most likely the person who was responsible for the attacks, Harry quickly pointed his wand at the boy's head and shouted: "Reducto! Reducto! Bombarda!"

Harry grinned as the boy didn't attempt to dodge or put up a shield. That grin disappeared, however, when Harry's spells passed right through him. Is he a Ghost? No, he looks alive. Maybe that's some kind of new shield spell? No, he would have had to cast it, and he doesn't even have a wand. How did that...

"Harry Potter, I was wondering if I was going to get the chance to meet you," the boy said with a smile.

Harry felt the gargoyle within him roar with rage and he pointed his wand at the boy and said, "Diffindo! Diffindo! Ater Flamma! Reducto!" - only to again watch as the three spells and the conjured ball of fire harmlessly passed through the image.

"What are you?" Harry growled in annoyance.

The boy tossed back his head and laughed heartedly. "Me? I'm just a memory."

"A...a memory?" Harry asked, stepping closer towards the image.

"Yes. I preserved the memory of my sixteen year old self in my diary. This beautiful young girl found it, and I've been slowly possessing her over the course of this year. Of course, it took a little longer than I expected, but when she found out I was Head Boy, she was quite willing to listen to the suggestions I made to her," the boy said with a self-satisfied smile.

Only then did Harry realize that on Hermione's stomach was a small black book. His eyes widened in horror when he recognized it as the same black book he had given to her in Diagon Alley. Oh Merlin! I gave her that book!

"May I ask you a question, Harry? I can call you Harry, can't I?" the boy asked happily.

Harry returned his attention back to the boy, but gave no responsive to him.

'Now, now, Harry, no need to clam up on me like that,' the boy hissed.

The Parseltongue caused Harry to mentally shake himself. 'You can ssspeak Parsssel tongue, how?' Harry demanded as he felt the gargoyle's frustration at not being able to hurt the person responsible for his friends being attacked.

"Ah, so you can speak, excellent," the boy said, reverting back to English.

"What's your name?" Harry commanded.

"How impolite of me, Harry. My name is Tom. Tom Marvolo Riddle," Tom introduced himself as he bent down and picked up Hermione's wand. He then proceeded to write out his name in fire.

"Cool charm," Harry said. If he can pick up a wand he must be becoming solid.

"Why thank you, Harry. Now, can I ask you a question?" Tom asked again.

"Err...sure... How about I get to ask a question after you ask one?" Harry said, stalling for time.

"Why, that sounds fair. I'll go first. How was a person like you able to stop the most powerful Dark Lord that ever lived?" Tom demanded, his friendly mannerisms disappearing in an instant.

Harry narrowed his eyes at the boy before saying: "I don't know. No one does, except maybe Dumbledore, and I wouldn't trust any answer he gave me. Why do you care?"

"I'm just a very curious person. You don't trust the headmaster?" Tom asked.

"Not any further than I can throw him. Tell me, Tom, are you a mudblood?" Harry asked menacingly.

"Crucio!" Tom snarled.

Ducking under the Unforgivable, Harry pointed his wand at Tom and said, "Reducto!"

Tom easily avoided the spell before pointing his wand at Harry and silently sending off a black curse with purple flames dancing around it.

Harry instantly rolled out of the way before incanting: "Bombarda! Proicio! Reducto! Reducto!"

Much to Harry's disappointment, Tom simply smiled and batted away the spells like they were nothing before saying: "I confess that I expected something more, Potter. The way this young lady talks about you, I was under the impression you were quite the student. I'm sad to see that she was mistaken. Crucio!"

The spell closed the gap between Harry and Tom instantly, striking Harry in the chest, and forced him to the ground screaming as he felt hundreds of burning knives ripping into his skin from every direction. Harry wasn't sure how long the spell was held, but when it was finally released and he came back to reality, he realized that he lay in the foetal position, sobbing on the stone floor.

"So weak," Tom sneered.

Mustering as much energy as he could, Harry slowly got to his knees and faced the now solid looking figure of Tom Riddle. Harry tried to speak, but he found himself spitting out large amounts of blood that were flowing from his tongue, which he had almost bitten through.

"Don't feel like talking anymore, Harry? Well, perhaps you only need the proper motivation," Tom said before turning to the giant statue of Salazar Slytherin and hissing: 'Ssspeak to me, Ssslytherin, Greatessst of the Hogwartsss Four.'

Harry numbly watched as the gigantic statue of Salazar Slytherin opened its mouth and a massive snake slowly uncurled onto the floor.

As soon as the snake had completely unraveled from the statue's mouth, Tom hissed: 'Kill him!'

Harry could only look on as the massive snake nodded its head before turning and locking eyes with Harry. As soon as Harry saw the creature's bright yellow eyes, he felt his stomach clench, and every muscle in his body involuntarily started to spasm. As quickly as the

feeling came, though, it disappeared, and Harry felt himself sag in relief.

‘Abomination, obey my Massster, he iss your creator'sss heir!’ Salazar hissed.

The massive Basilisk turned its head from Harry to Salazar before it said: ‘What liessss do you dare to ssssssspeak!’

Harry quickly mustered as much strength as he could before he said: ‘He iss not lying. I am Harry Potter, magical heir of Sssalazar Ssslytherin.’

‘He liesss, I am the last heir of Ssslytherin! Kill him, kill him!’ Tom roared.

The Basilisk seemed confused as it looked between Harry, Salazar, and Tom. The creature flicked out its massive tongue several times before saying: ‘How can there be two?’

Harry sagged in relief; however, Tom was clearly enraged. ‘LIESSS! I AM SSSLYTHERIN'SSS ONLY HEIR! Kill him!’

‘Ssshut up, Mudblood!’ Harry barked.

The Basilisk instantly turned its head to face Harry. ‘What did you ssssay?’ it demanded.

‘I called him a mudblood,’ Harry said.

‘How dare you!’ the Basilisk hissed menacingly as it raised itself up, exposing its true size.

‘Riddle iss not a pureblood,’ Harry said, more strongly than he felt.

The massive Basilisk seemed to appraise Harry again for a long time before hissing: ‘Riddle?’

‘Hisss name, it’sss Tom Marvolo Riddle. My friend got me a book with all pureblood namessss; Riddle is not one of them. He isss a mudblood!’ Harry hissed as a plan quickly formed in his head.

The massive serpent turned its attention back on Tom. ‘Issss thissss true!’ It demanded.

‘I...I...,’ Tom started.

‘He isss a mudblood! Kill Him!’ Harry hissed.

The Basilisk instantly obliged and quickly took off towards Tom, its jaws open wide. Harry watched as Tom’s eyes widened in horror at the attacking serpent.

The snake snapped its massive jaws around Tom, but to Harry’s surprise, he heard no scream of agony or pain. This clearly baffled the Basilisk as it quickly opened its mouth and pulled away. Harry saw a very annoyed looking Tom staring at Harry, but otherwise he looked perfectly fine.

‘You’ll pay for thissss, Potter,’ Tom hissed menacingly.

Curious, Harry raised his wand and said: “Diffindo.”

The Basilisk quickly got out of the way and sent a glare at Harry only to stop when it realized that it was not the target of the attack. Both the Basilisk and Harry watched as Harry’s spell went right through Tom.

‘What issss thissss?’ the Basilisk hissed.

‘He’ssss not real. He isss just a memory,’ Harry hissed in annoyance.

‘Memory?’ the Basilisk asked, confused.

Harry heard Salazar mumbled something that sounded like “Ssstupid abomination”, but he quickly turned his attention back to the now harmless Tom Riddle.

'Who are you, Tom? I know you aren't related to Ssslytherin because Voldemort is the current Lord Ssslytherin,' Harry hissed.

Tom looked very smug for a moment, but then he completely disappeared. Harry lowered his wand only to raise it again as Hermione Granger quickly stood up, her eyes glowing red as she picked up her wand and waved it at Tom's flaming name. The letters instantly reorganized themselves and Harry watched as TOM MARVOLO RIDDLE became I AM LORD VOLDEMORT.

"Merlin!" Harry said as Hermione's body fell to the floor and Tom slowly shimmered back into existence.

"So you see, Harry Potter, Voldemort is my past, my present, and my future!" Tom said with glee.

Oh, bloody hell! Riddle is Voldemort. Voldemort's a half blood. Well, that's ironic: the champion for pure blood supremacy isn't a pureblood! I wonder who knows about that. No, I can't think about that right now. This is Voldemort, even a young Voldemort is still Voldemort. How am I going to get out of this? I can't hurt him as my spells fly right through him and that damn Cruciatus is killing me. I can barely move, I'm tired, and I hurt all over. Think, think, think. I need to get rid of Riddle. How do I do that, though? How did all of this start...how did...Granger! He's possessing Granger through that bloody diary! It must be how he's alive!

"Incendio!" Harry barked, pointing his wand at the small black book that was a few meters away. A jet of fire exploded out of Harry's wand and struck the book, but it had no effect other than making Tom laugh.

"So you figured it out. Maybe you're not as useless as I thought you were; but did you really think I wouldn't put an anti-flame spell on my diary?" Tom asked menacingly.

"Reducto! Reducto! Bombarda! Ater Flamma! Diffindo!" Harry called out frantically; however, each spell had no effect and Tom's laughter only increased.

"It won't be long, now. Soon, I won't need the diary and then I'll deal with you and this traitorous snake!" Tom spat viciously.

'Damn it, just die!' Harry hissed as he continued to send curse after curse at the diary.

'Massster, what are you doing?' Salazar demanded.

'Thisss diary must be desstroyed. It'sss the only way to kill him,' Harry said anxiously.

'Let me try,' Salazar hissed as he slithered over to the book and sunk his fangs into the cover, sending jets of black venom into the book.

"Ahhh!" Tom cried out gripping his stomach in pain.

'Sssalazar, it'sss working,' Harry said ecstatically.

'Die, you fucking ssserpent,' Tom hissed angrily before his image disappeared. A moment later the diary glowed red and Salazar was blasted backwards into the air.

Harry hastily cast a cushioning charm for his snake and rushed over to his familiar. 'Sssalazar, are you alright?'

'Yesss,' Salazar replied weakly and not at all convincingly.

'Ssstay where you are,' Harry said before turning it's attention to the massive Basilisk who was watching everything, looking confused. 'Basssilissk, do you want to kill the mudblood imposster who hasss possed as your creator'sss heir?'

'Yesssssss,' the Basilisk replied angrily.

'Then bite that book on the ground and send as much venom as you can into it,' Harry commanded.

The Basilisk once again looked confused, but did as it was ordered to. It immediately went over and bit down into the glowing red book. The Basilisk let out a hiss of pain as Voldemort attempted to blast it away,

but the Basilisk was clearly too strong and continued to pump its venom into the book.

Harry watched as the book's bright red colour started to fade until it looked just like a regular diary. Harry was about to tell the Basilisk it could stop when he heard a loud scream echo from all directions and the diary exploded, sending the Basilisk flying backwards a few feet.

'Excellent thinking, Massster.' Salazar said calmly.

'Thank you,' Harry replied, feeling exhausted.

'What would you have me do now, sssspeaker? Will we kill thossssse who are unworthy now?' the Basilisk asked slithering over.

'No,' Harry replied tiredly, 'we can't do that now. The teachersss and the Board of Governorsss will close the school.'

'Good, bring back only thosssse who are worthy!' the Basilisk hissed joyfully.

'NO!' Harry hissed sharply before he remembered what Salazar had said about the Basilisk only obeying him as long as he followed the original commands of its creator. 'We can't attack right now. We must show patience. We will attack soon.'

Harry thought the Basilisk looked mutinous for a moment before it said: 'What of thisssss one, may I eat her?' the Basilisk inquired as Hermione started to stir.

'No, there issss a freshly dead human in the next chamber, go eat it!' Salazar hissed sharply.

The Basilisk looked at Harry for confirmation and he simply nodded his head.

'Assssss you wissssssh, but they are better alive,' the Basilisk grumbled and slithered away.

As soon as the Basilisk started to leave, Harry slowly walked over to Hermione. What do I do? What does she remember? Does she know I gave her the diary? Harry thought frantically. Perhaps, I should just...it might be best if I...Harry thought as he raised his wand, pointing it at Granger's neck. "Diffin...Ahhhh!" Harry screamed as he felt the gargoyle viciously rip into his mind, sending him image after image of him giving Granger the diary and of Tonks and Ginny lying frozen in the hospital wing. Harry felt waves of disgust coming from the gargoyle at what he was planning on doing and his entire body shook in pain until he mentally screamed his acceptance of the gargoyle's demand that Granger live.

When the gargoyle finally stopped assaulting his mind, Harry collapsed onto the stone floor directly next to Granger. Blood again pooled in his mouth and he felt like he had just had the Cruciatus cast upon him again.

"Granger, Granger, wake up," Harry said weakly.

Harry watched as Granger's eyes started to move back and forth under her eyelids before they slowly opened. Slowly, she seemed to realize where she was and she gasped in terror before turning to her side and seeing Harry. Harry saw her eyes register shock, disbelief, and horror upon seeing him, but these emotions all soon disappeared when she saw the state he was in. "P-Po-Potter, are you...What happened?" she asked before her eyes widened and she started to cry.

"Potter,...I...I...I swear it wasn't me...I mean it was...I did it...but please...I didn't want to...It was Tom! Merlin, where's Tom...Potter, there is this...well, it's a diary, but..."

"Granger, be quiet," Harry said. "I stopped Voldemort."

"Why would you ever bring that up now?" Granger moaned.

It took Harry a moment to realize that she had misunderstood him. "No Granger, Tom. His full name was Tom Marvolo Riddle. That's an anagram for 'I am Lord Voldemort'. The diary was created by Voldemort when he was sixteen," Harry said weakly, any thought of

scolding the girl was quickly stopped by the gargoyle's low growl in the back of his head.

Hermione's eyes went wide when she heard that, but then a loud hissing caused her attention to shift. "Merlin, Potter a Basilisk is down here. It'll kill us," Hermione screamed in terror.

"No, it won't. Just close your eyes, Granger," Harry said softly.

"But..." Hermione started.

"Just do it!" Harry commanded and Hermione quickly obeyed.

"Keep your eyes closed. A Basilisk can kill you by looking at you, but the death stare doesn't work on Parselmouths," Harry said as Hermione wildly nodded her head.

'The mudblood awakensssss, may I eat her now?' the Basilisk asked as it re-entered the main chamber.

'No. If she diesss, the ssschool will clossse,' Harry said.

'Let me eat the Mudblood,' the Basilisk demanded.

'No! Merlin, don't you think of anything elsssse! She musst live or the ssschool will clossse,' Harry said.

'My maker promissssed me the blood of the mudbloodsss! You will let me feast upon her flesssh!' the Basilisk hissed viciously.

'Did you maker alssso tell you to never attack purebloodsss?' Harry hissed, an idea quickly forming in his head.

'Of coursse,' the Basilisk hissed back.

'Well, then you have failed your creator. You petrified two purebloodsss!' Harry said, lying slightly about Tonks' blood status.

'Liesss,' the Basilisk hissed.

'You have! They were invisible at the time when you petrified them!' Harry argued back.

The Basilisk looked very confused and asked: 'Invisible?'

'Ssstupid creature, you could not sssee them. Not that that'sss an excuse,' Salazar snapped as he gingerly raised himself up on Harry's shoulders.

'For attacking purebloodsss, your punishment is too let this mudblood live. I am your creator'sss heir and you will obey me,' Harry declared hoping desperately that the Basilisk would concede. Fortunately, the massive creature nodded its head in acceptance and Harry let out a breath of relief before turning back to Granger.

"It's alright, Hermione," Harry said, a little surprised himself at his use of Granger's first name.

Hermione slowly lifted her head, but kept her eyes closed.

"Hermione, the Basilisk is still here," Harry said, causing Hermione to tense, "but we need to leave. I'll tell the Basilisk to keep its eyes closed so you can open yours if you want," Harry said.

"N...no, I'll keep them closed," Hermione said weakly.

"Alright," Harry said calmly as he staggeringly got to his feat, pulling Hermione up with him. As the two slowly began their walk out of the main Chamber, he asked: "Hermione, how did you come across Voldemort's diary?"

"I...I...I don't know," Hermione wailed. "I just found it in my bag one day. I never saw it before, but it was blank so I decided to keep it. I didn't know what I was doing, I swear, Potter!"

Harry let out a breath that he hadn't known he was holding. Good, she didn't know it was me. "It's alright, Hermione, I believe you," Harry said.

"How are we going to get out of here?" Hermione asked.

"Um, good question." 'How do we leave?' Harry asked the Basilisk.

'Stairs,' the massive serpent replied.

'Thank you. I shall return soon,' Harry said as he guided Hermione out of the main chamber.

The Basilisk merely nodded its head and slithered back into the mouth of Salazar Slytherin.

'Stairs,' Harry hissed.

Slowly, a disillusioned rotating stairway, much like the one in the headmaster's office, appeared. Harry was about to step forward when Salazar hissed: 'Ssstop, put me down!'

Harry immediately complied with his familiar, but before he could ask what he wanted, Salazar was racing back into the main chamber. Harry and Hermione waited for a few moments before Salazar returned with the remains of Riddle's diary in his mouth.

'What are you doing with that?' Harry asked.

'Proof,' Salazar replied and Harry simply nodded his head in agreement as he took the diary from Salazar's mouth.

Harry quickly wrapped Salazar around his shoulders and led Hermione, who was now clinging to him with her eyes closed very tightly, to the staircase. Slowly, they made their way upwards, and walked into Moaning Myrtle's bathroom.

"Alright Hermione, we're out of the Chamber, you can open your eyes now," Harry said.

Hermione very slowly opened her eyes and looked around. She let out a huge sigh of relief before the stress of everything seemed to catch up to her. Her eyes closed and she fainted.

Harry saw Hermione close her eyes and managed to catch her just before her head struck the tiled bathroom floor. Just great. I guess I have to take her to the hospital wing.

Harry quickly cast the Mobilicorpus Charm on Hermione and was surprised at just how tired casting the simple charm made him. Must be the Cruciatus...or that damn gargoyle. Harry thought viciously as he started to make his way to the hospital wing.

'Massster, what do you intend to do about the Abomination?' Salazar asked curiously.

'Kill it,' Harry confessed.

'Do you not wisssh to kill the mudbloodsss like it desssiresss?' Salazar asked.

It took Harry a long time to come up with an answer to that question before he said, 'I think that Tonksss and my gargoyle would be very uppsset with me if the Basssilissk ate Hermione,' Harry said after a while.

Salazar seemed to analyze that response before hissing: 'And the onesss they don't care about?'

'I can not be asssssociated with a creature whossse only desssire is killing mudbloodsss, Sssalazar. If it killed one, everyone would think I ordered it to do so,' Harry said finally.

'Good, I look forward to itsss demissse,' Salazar said happily.

As Harry approached the hospital wing, he could clearly distinguish several loud voices belonging to Professors Snape and McGonagall, Madam Pomfrey and Lucius Malfoy. Taking a deep breath, Harry pushed open the door and walked inside.

As soon as Harry opened the hospital wing doors, every face in the room turned to look at him. Harry was astounded to see not only Snape, McGonagall, Madam Pomfrey, and Lucius, but also Dumbledore, Flitwick, Sprout, and two people Harry knew but could

not place. There was silence for a brief moment before Snape pulled out his wand and shot off a blue curse at Harry's head.

Harry could only watch as the spell flew towards him at great speed. He knew he was far too tired to muster any shield spell, especially since he was barely managing to levitate Hermione. As the spell inched closer he realized he was completely defenseless. When the curse was a few feet away from hitting him in the head, an unused hospital bed leapt in front of him and blocked the curse. Harry breathed a sigh of relief that he didn't have to use Granger as a shield. That thought, however, instantly earned him a headache from the gargoyle, and he tentatively rubbed his head.

When the bed returned to its original position, Harry's eyes widened at the large burn mark that showed where the curse had struck. Harry narrowed his eyes and turned to glare at Snape; however, to Harry's surprise, Flitwick was standing over Snape's unconscious body with his wand an inch from the man's crooked nose. Harry watched as Flitwick flicked his wand and hundreds of ropes suddenly began restraining Snape very tightly. When Flitwick clearly showed no signs of stopping the ropes from tightening around Snape, Dumbledore said: "Filius, enough; Severus has been adequately restrained."

Flitwick merely nodded his head and everyone's attention shifted back to Harry.

"Mr. Potter, I hope you have a good reason for attacking not one, but two members of the Hogwarts faculty today!" McGonagall said angrily.

Instead of answering, Harry simply stepped aside, revealing the unconscious Hermione Granger floating behind him.

"My baby!" a woman shouted as she and the man Harry couldn't place raced across the hospital wing towards Hermione along with Madam Pomfrey.

After Harry had lowered Hermione onto an unused bed, he was roughly grabbed from behind and pushed into a wall by an irate Mr. Granger.

“What did you do to my little girl!” Mr. Granger demanded.

As soon as Harry was grabbed, instincts immediately took over. He drew his wand and by the time Mr. Granger had finished screaming, Harry had already finished the incantation for a powerful concussion hex. The spell connected with Mr. Granger’s chest and launched him across the hospital wing. It was only the quick spell work of Dumbledore that saved Mr. Granger from smashing his head into the stone wall on the other side of the room. The effort of casting the spell on Harry though was tremendous and he slipped to the floor, unable to keep his feat under him. Flitwick, obviously seeing his exhaustion, levitated him onto the nearest hospital bed.

After Dumbledore lowered Mr. Granger onto another bed, Madam Pomfrey quickly ran several spells over Hermione and announced that she was simply exhausted. The matron soon raced over to check up on Mr. Granger. McGonagall turned to reprimand Harry; however, seeing his exhausted state and physical appearance, she held her tongue. She was about to ask what happened when a shriek from Madam Pomfrey caused their attention to shift again.

Harry wearily looked over at Mr. Granger’s bed, and saw that Salazar was on Mr. Granger’s chest with his fangs exposed ready to strike the terrified muggle.

‘You dare attack my massster!’ Salazar hissed in anger.

‘Ssstop,’ Harry hissed quietly to his familiar.

Salazar turned his head from Mr. Granger and locked eyes with Harry. ‘He needssss to be punisssshed!’ Salazar demanded.

‘Yesss, but if you attack him, Dumbledore and the otherssss will attack you. I can not defend you from them. Leave him for now,’ Harry ordered tiredly.

Salazar quickly turned his head away from Harry and saw Dumbledore, McGonagall, Flitwick, Pomfrey, and Sprout’s wands all turned on him. Deciding that he would get his vengeance later,

Salazar slithered off of Mr. Granger's chest and made his way over to Harry's bed.

"Mr. Potter, you should know not to attack guests of this school, especially if they are unable to defend themselves from magic," McGonagall said, though clearly lacking her usual bite.

"Me," Harry snorted tiredly. "I didn't attack him. I defended myself appropriately from the filthy Muggle!"

"What curse did you use, Mr. Potter?" Madam Pomfrey asked as she waved her wand over Mr. Granger's sternum.

"Concussion hex," Harry said.

"Mr. Potter, a concussion hex at that distance could be fatal!" Sprout said in shock.

"Stupid Muggle never should have attack me, then," Harry mumbled before saying, "In case you can't tell, I'm a little on edge from rescuing Granger from the Chamber of Secrets and Snape attacking me as soon as I entered the bloody hospital wing."

As soon as Harry was done speaking, the staff looked at each other a little sheepishly and Madam Pomfrey came over and began casting several spells on him. After a few moments, the matron gasped and her face quickly turned white. She turned to the headmaster and said: "He needs a post-Cruciatius potion."

This statement had the immediate effect of earning a gasp from McGonagall and Sprout, a look of horror from Flitwick, and a grave look of sorrow from Dumbledore, who walked over to a corner of the hospital wing and waved his wand. Harry looked on in detachment as a hidden cabinet materialized and Dumbledore unlocking it. Dumbledore carefully removed a single vial of swirling black liquid and handed it to Madam Pomfrey before making the cabinet disappear from sight.

"You really did it," McGonagall said. "You found th-the Chamber of Secrets?"

“Obviously,” Harry drawled after drinking the vile tasting potion.

“So...so you really were close to finding it, then,” McGonagall said, sounding embarrassed.

Harry shot a penetrating glare at her. “Yes, I was. Lovely how you were planning on suspending me for doing so.”

“Harry, I can assure you, you won’t be suspended. In light of your saving Ms. Granger, I will petition the Board to have the suspension voided if the headmaster chooses to still enforce it,” Lucius said.

“Which I will not do, Lucius. Now, Harry, if you don’t mind, I think we should take this meeting back to my office,” Dumbledore said.

“Are you mad?! The boy needs rest! I doubt he’ll be able to walk to the door let alone to your office, Albus!” Madam Pomfrey exclaimed.

“I will take us there by Portkey, Poppy, and if I thought reliving the experience would be easier on him tomorrow, I would gladly wait,” Dumbledore said unhappily.

Madam Pomfrey made several rude comments before rushing off and grabbing several potions, which she then proceeded to force down Harry’s throat.

“Your office, sir?” Harry asked as he felt the Pepper-Up-Potion take effect.

“Yes, Harry. After word spread about a student being taken into the chamber, the Board thought it would be best if I returned as Headmaster of Hogwarts,” Dumbledore said kindly.

“Headmaster, I would like to be present to hear how young Harry managed to find the Chamber when no one else was able to do so,” Lucius said as he placed a hand on Harry’s shoulder.

“Very well, Lucius. Harry, if you don’t object, the four heads of house will also accompany us to my office to hear the story,” Dumbledore said.

Harry shot a look at the unconscious form of Snape and said: “All four?”

Dumbledore’s eyes twinkled for a moment before he said: “Poppy perhaps you could give Severus a Dreamless Sleep potion. I daresay this day has been rather exhausting for him.”

“I’ll take care of it, Headmaster,” Poppy said as she forced a potion down Mr. Granger’s mouth.

“Mrs. Granger, I would like for you to attend this meeting as well. Your husband and daughter are in good hands with Poppy. Minerva, do you think you could stay as well, just in case Ms. Granger wakes up?” Dumbledore said.

McGonagall nodded her acceptance.

“Headmaster, I must go work on the Mandrakes to insure that they will be ready in time,” Sprout said.

Dumbledore nodded in agreement and Sprout left the hospital wing.

“Filius, do you have somewhere to be?” Dumbledore asked.

“No, Headmaster, I do not; and even if I did, I would not miss this story,” Filius said.

“Very well then, we shall adjourn to my office. I’m sure Harry has a rather interesting tale to tell us,” Dumbledore said as he took out piece of parchment and said, “Everyone please hold on, Portus.”

Headmaster’s Office, Hogwarts.

Upon arriving in Dumbledore’s office, Harry immediately collapsed into a seat between Flitwick and Lucius.

"Before we begin, Lucius, will you agree to inform the Board of Harry's explanation tonight?" Dumbledore asked.

"Yes," Lucius said impatiently.

"Good. Now, Harry, why don't you pick up where Professor Snape's story left off?" Dumbledore suggested.

"Where exactly did he leave off?" Harry asked unenthusiastically.

"You stunned him in the back," Flitwick replied with a slight chuckle.

Harry's face hardened slightly before he said: "I'm sorry sir, but I doubt that Professor Snape would have let me go. He seemed rather enthusiastic about me being suspended."

"Harry, in the future, I would appreciate it if you didn't stun my teachers, but I believe your actions against Professor Snape can be overlooked," Dumbledore said sternly, but his twinkling eyes gave away his amusement.

"After I stunned Snape, I had Andi summon Salazar, who had been able to locate the person opening the Chamber and where it was hidden," Harry said.

"Who was opening it?" Flitwick asked curiously.

Harry placed the remains of the diary on Dumbledore's desk.

"I'm afraid you have me at a loss, Harry," Dumbledore admitted.

"That is all that is left of the diary of Tom Marvolo Riddle," Harry said as he tried to gauge everyone's reactions.

Dumbledore's eyes widened momentarily before they hardened in determination. The Headmaster picked up the diary and took it over to a desk where he rapidly began casting spells at the diary.

Flitwick and Mrs. Granger both seemed to be completely confused at Harry's declaration and at the Headmaster's actions.

The strangest reaction came from Mr. Malfoy. Harry couldn't help but notice how Mr. Malfoy's eyes narrowed dangerously at him. The look quickly vanished, though, and Mr. Malfoy presented himself with a look of confusion matching Flitwick and Mrs. Granger.

Dumbledore stopped his wand movements, looked up from the diary, and met Harry's gaze. "This explains a lot, Harry," Dumbledore said wearily.

"I'm afraid I'm confused," Lucius said as Flitwick and Mrs. Granger nodded in agreement.

"Few know that the true identity of Lord Voldemort was in fact Tom Marvolo Riddle. He was Hogwarts' Head Boy in 1945. I believed that he was guilty of opening the Chamber of Secrets when he was at school, but he managed to find a way to blame Hagrid for the crime. This diary, while destroyed, still has the remains of several powerful spells on it. The ones that I have so far been able to identify are a trust charm, a compulsion charm, and a very subtle impression charm. All of them have been warped by Tom to suit his purposes," Dumbledore explained.

"I don't understand, Headmaster. What do those charms do?" Ms. Granger asked quickly.

"Filius, would you care to explain?" Dumbledore asked.

"The trust charm, the compulsion charm, and the impression charm are not evil spells, Mrs. Granger. The trust charm was originally created by two very close friends during a war. They were seeking a way to insure that their correspondence with each other would not be intercepted; however, one of their experiments had a strange side effect. The spell not only allowed the friendly correspondence to be private, but it increased the feeling of trust between the two friends. Among the charm's numerous uses today, it is used between business associates to ensure fair dealings. The compulsion charm has been around for Merlin knows how long. The founders used several powerful compulsion charms to insure that Muggles didn't find

Hogwarts. The spell has hundreds of uses, but all of them compel someone to do something. The impression charm is used mostly on paintings in the wizarding world. I'm sure you've seen how the portraits here talk and act as though they were real people. They have all had an impression charm placed on them to make them behave life-like," Flitwick said.

"I don't understand, why are these things bad?" Mrs. Granger asked.

"Sadly, Mrs. Granger, not everyone uses these spells for their original intent, and Tom Riddle was able to manipulate these charms for his own devices," Dumbledore said.

"So these charms can be used for...other purposes?" Mrs. Granger asked weakly.

"Yes. You see, Mrs. Granger, Tom was a very bright student. He most likely set the charms to remain inactive until someone started to write in the diary. Once someone wrote in the diary, the trust charm would have activated, causing the writer to feel safe writing in the diary. After the trust charm, I believe the compulsion charm would have activated, causing Hermione to constantly want to write in the diary," Dumbeldore said gravely.

"Why would that be bad, though? I mean, it's just a diary," Mrs. Granger asked.

"You are forgetting the impression charm. Tom most likely placed the impression charm on the diary, effectively leaving an echo of his personality in it. I wouldn't be surprised to find out that the diary actually wrote back to Hermione, and had her open the Chamber of Secrets," Dumbledore said sadly.

"So what are you saying? That Hermione just did whatever this diary told her to do?" Mrs. Granger asked in horror.

"I'm afraid it's much worse than that, Mrs. Granger. The impression charm on the diary was not the standard impression charm used on portraits. When activated, this impression charm would seek to

impress itself upon a living being. I believe the diary was actually possessing Hermione throughout the year," Dumbledore replied.

"Oh my God! You mean to tell me a book was controlling my daughter's body!" Mrs. Granger shrieked.

"I can not be sure, but..." Dumbledore said.

"I can," Harry said, causing everyone to look at him.

"Voldemort was able to take over Hermione's body when he wanted to, but he also was able to exist outside of it," Harry said.

"What do you mean?" Flitwick asked.

"I mean that he looked like he was real. He looked like a sixteen year old Hogwarts student," Harry said.

"Tom must have placed another spell on the diary. I will look into that at a later time. Harry, please continue with your story," Dumbledore prompted.

Harry momentarily met Dumbledore's eyes and could tell the old man was not telling them everything. "Well, Salazar and I found the Chamber of Secrets..."

"Where exactly is it, Mr. Potter? The staff must have searched everywhere," Flitwick said.

"Well, to access it you must be a Parselmouth, and I doubt anyone thought to check Moaning Myrtle's bathroom on the third floor," Harry said.

"The entrance is in a girl's bathroom!" Flitwick exclaimed in shock.

"Yes," Harry replied.

"Slytherin was clearly more cunning than the historians gave him credit for," Lucius mumbled.

"Indeed. So, Harry, after you entered the Chamber, what did you do?" Dumbledore prompted.

"Um, well, I met Voldemort, and like I said, he had somehow managed to make himself appear. At first, he was just an image, but as time went on, he became more real," Harry said.

"So what happened next, Harry?" Dumbledore prompted when Harry looked about to lose himself in his thoughts.

"Well, I sort of insulted him and we dueled. He won and ended up using the Cruciatus Curse on me," Harry said, wincing slightly before continuing. "After that, he taunted me and called for the assistance of Slytherin's monster."

"What was it?" Lucius asked, truly curious.

"A Basilisk," Harry intoned.

"Clearly, Slytherin's madness was not lost on the historians, Lucius," Flitwick said, his face paling.

"A Basilisk would make sense. If the children saw the creature indirectly, they would be petrified and not killed. What happened once Tom freed the monster?" Dumbledore asked.

"Once it realized that in serving Tom, it was serving a Mudblood, the Basilisk turned on him," Harry said, smiling for the first time that night.

"How did you ever convince it to turn on...on He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named?" Filius asked.

"Luck," Harry admitted.

"What happened to the Dark Lord?" Lucius asked, not noticing Dumbledore and Flitwick narrow their eyes at him.

"The Basilisk attacked him, so he was forced back into the diary. I figured out that he must need the diary to exist, so I tried to destroy it. I tried everything, but nothing worked. I blasted, burnt, and cut that

damn book, but nothing seemed to affect it. Finally, Salazar bit it and injected his venom into it. That seemed to hurt him, but the diary retaliated and blasted him away. I realized that snake venom might destroy it and I ordered the Basilisk to bite the diary. That seemed to do the trick,” Harry said tiredly.

“Interesting. So I take it the creature is still alive?” Dumbledore asked.

“Yes. Although I suggest we kill it very soon,” Harry admitted.

”Why? If you are able to control the creature, Harry, the school would have an endless supply of Basilisk venom and scales. The amount the school would be able to generate would be quite large,” Lucius stated.

”The basilisk is insane, and I mean that. Its only real desire seems to be to attack people. Since I’m the only Parselmouth around, if the creature did attack anyone, I’d most likely be blamed,” Harry said honestly.

”I will contact Cornelius and inform him that we will be eliminating the snake,” Dumbledore said in a voice that allowed no arguments.

”Err...well, sir, do you have any idea how to do that? It is pretty big,” Harry said.

“The crow of a rooster is fatal to a Basilisk, Harry...Now that I think about it; I suppose we now know why Hagrid’s roosters were killed earlier this year,” Dumbledore said with a sad smile.

“Will Hermione be in trouble...for what she did?” Mrs. Granger asked hesitantly.

Dumbledore looked at Mrs. Granger compassionately. “No, Mrs. Granger. As I said earlier, Hermione was not in control of what happened. It would be good if you reminded her of that over the summer so that she doesn’t feel guilty. We will also not release her name as the person who was possessed by Voldemort. We don’t want to run the risk of having her peers lash out at her for something she did not do,” Dumbledore said kindly.

"Thank you, but I'm not sure how much longer they'll be her peers. Dan and I considered taking her out of this school last year, and now..." Mrs. Granger trailed off.

"I would hope that you reconsider, Mrs. Granger. While Hermione has had two terrible experiences since coming to Hogwarts, she is an incredibly talented witch. The decision is of course up to you and your husband, but you have to understand that being a witch is who Hermione is. Simply removing her from Hogwarts will not make that part of her disappear," Dumbledore said.

Mrs. Granger seemed to be thinking about Dumbledore's words before standing up and saying: "I-I will tell Dan that. I should really go see if he and Hermione are alright," Mrs. Granger said.

"Of course, Mrs. Granger. Filius, would you mind escorting Mrs. Granger back to the hospital wing?" Dumbledore asked.

Flitwick nodded his head and quickly led Mrs. Granger out of the headmaster's office. When they were gone, Lucius said: "One must ask the question of where Granger got such a dark artifact, Headmaster. This diary isn't exactly something you can buy. I hope you will be conducting an investigation into this matter. If you find that she obtained the diary through illegal channels, I expect to see her expelled and her wand snapped."

"I agree that this must not happen again, Lucius. Assure the board that I will make a full enquiry into the origins of this diary," Dumbledore said, staring Lucius right in the eyes.

"Harry, is there anything else you believe we should know?" Dumbledore asked refusing to look away from Mr. Malfoy.

"Um, no, nothing," Harry lied quickly.

Dumbledore tore his gaze from Lucius and locked eyes with Harry, who instinctively focused on his Occlumency.

"Very well. If that is all, Lucius, I believe you may leave. Harry, I had best take you to the hospital wing now or Poppy will never forgive me," Dumbledore said kindly.

A/N: I'm truly sorry for the long wait between chapters, but life got in the way. At over 22,000 words, this Chapter is my longest ever and I do hope it was worth the wait. I promise that the next and final chapter of DLP part 1 will be out in a few weeks. Thank you to everyone who sent me a review or a PM asking about the story, I read them all and I do try to answer every question.

The next chapter will close out Harry's second year and answer many of the questions this chapter didn't such as the fallout from Lockhart's disappearance/death, Ginny and Tonks' reactions to finding out who was opening the Chamber of Secrets, and what long term effects giving the diary to Hermione will have on Harry.

Thanks again to mein beta EvilDime for her work on this chapter.

## Chapter 26

### Closing the Chamber

Wednesday, April 28th, Hogwarts Hospital Wing

Harry Potter wearily opened his eyes as he slowly awoke. He immediately regretted obtaining consciousness, though, as pain encompassed every part of his body. Harry's feet, legs, arms, and hands shook under the onslaught of vicious tremors; his chest felt as though it had been carved open and poorly patched back together while his face contorted in agony as tears began to cascade down from his bloodshot eyes. Unprepared for the sudden onslaught of agony, Harry opened his mouth to scream only to realize that the muscles in his mouth were in just as much pain as the rest of his body. The result was that instead of a scream, a low pitiful sounding moan echoed through the hospital wing.

Madam Pomfrey was upon him within moments, forcing some of the most disgusting potions he had ever tasted down his throat. While the muscles in his neck protested swallowing the heavy liquids, the potions' effects were almost immediate. The tremors slowed and the soreness around his chest and muscles dissipated.

"Thank you," Harry managed to wheeze out.

"It is quite alright Mr. Potter," Madam Pomfrey said compassionately.

"Why do I feel so...so terrible?" Harry croaked out. Seeing the look of utter disbelief on the matron's face Harry clarified, "I didn't feel like this last night in Dumbledore's office."

Madam Pomfrey let out a sigh before saying, "Mr. Potter, I was against the Headmaster taking you to his office last night; however, it was ultimately decided that it would be best to hear what happened before you forgot any details. As for why you felt better last night, I confess that was my doing. You were barely able to stand, let alone have a conversation. The after effects of the Cruciatus curse were already beginning to manifest, and in order to give you time to tell the

Headmaster what happened, I pumped you full of enough potions to temporarily pacify a dragon.”

Harry found himself momentarily annoyed at Madam Pomfrey, but quickly forced such thoughts out of his mind. It wouldn't do him any good to be upset with the matron of the hospital wing, especially when he needed her help. Instead he asked, “I don't suppose that you could drug me up like you did last night?”

Madam Pomfrey sent him a regretful look before saying, “No, Mr. Potter, that is not an option. I spent most of last night insuring that you wouldn't slip into a coma from all those potions, and I am not about to tempt fate a second time.”

“Why does it hurt to speak?” Harry finally asked.

“The Cruciatus is indiscriminate with the damage it does to muscles and nerves, Mr. Potter. Your throat hurts because of the significant strain the curse placed upon your larynx. You also nearly bit your tongue in half,” Madam Pomfrey said gently.

Harry wanted to scream in frustration as the memory of Tom Riddle holding him under the Cruciatus resurfaced. He felt the Gargoyle within him snarl in anger and disappointment at the way he was so swiftly and utterly defeated by the young Voldemort. The ease with which the sixteen year old Voldemort had fluidly batted away his attacks caused Harry to share in the Gargoyle's disappointment. Voldemort was powerful, there could be no disputing that. Even with Harry's natural affinity for magic, Voldemort was leaps and bounds a more accomplished duelist; his effortless display of silently casting powerful dark magic demonstrated that much.

“Mr. Potter, are you alright?” Madam Pomfrey asked, shaking Harry from his thoughts.

“Yes ma'am, just thinking,” Harry replied honestly.

“I understand, Harry,” Madam Pomfrey said earnestly, “Hopefully, you will be able to leave in a...”

“Get it away! Someone, HELP!”

Madam Pomfrey quickly turned her head towards the shouts and Harry gingerly twisted his neck to follow her line of sight. On the far side of the infirmary, Hermione’s father was sitting upright in his bed, a bandage wrapped around his chest and head, the result of Harry’s well aimed concussion hex. The reason for the Muggle’s cries for help was the four and a half foot long snake that had risen up as high as it could from the floor in front of his bed.

Harry was too far away to hear what Salazar was angrily hissing to the Muggle, but he knew it was nothing flattering. Turning his head back to Madam Pomfrey, Harry saw her fingering her wand in preparation for the snake to strike. “Madam Pomfrey, please put the Soronus charm on me,” Harry requested tiredly.

“What? Why?” Madam Pomfrey demanded momentarily shifting her attention back to Harry.

“My voice isn’t strong enough to carry that far and I doubt you want Salazar to get into a fight with the muggle,” Harry answered.

Madam Pomfrey looked hesitant but eventually said, “Very well, but only say what is necessary to get your serpent under control. That spell will put a strain on your already damaged vocal cords. Understood?”

At Harry’s nod of acceptance, Madam Pomfrey quickly cast Soronus before again fixing her wand on the dangerous serpent that was apparently threatening her patient.

‘SSSALAZAR,’ Harry’s magically enhanced voice boomed, the thunderous hissing heard throughout the hospital wing and well into the hallway outside, ‘COME OVER HERE.’

Salazar shifted its gaze back and forth between Mr. Granger and Harry a few times before it angrily hissed at Mr. Granger one last time and slowly began slithering over to Harry.

Seeing that the snake was no longer an immediate threat to her other patient, Madam Pomfrey quickly removed the Soronus charm from Harry and informed him that it would be best if he refrained from speaking or at least spoke quietly for the next hour just to be safe. Turning around to go check up on Mr. Granger and the still unconscious Hermione, Madam Pomfrey found herself standing less than two feet away from Harry's familiar, who began hissing at her.

"He wants you to pick him up and put him on the bed," Harry said quietly.

Madam Pomfrey spun around and shot an incredulous look at her patient, who was fighting the urge to laugh.

Poppy quickly debated the pros and cons of leaving Mr. Potter with his familiar. She had seen the Headmaster personally levitate the snake out of the infirmary last night and the doors had not been opened since. Clearly the large serpent had found another way into the hospital wing. This unfortunately meant that even if she tossed the snake out, it could return and would most likely be a bit more irritated. Ultimately, she decided that she would rather know exactly where Mr. Potter's snake was than having it wandering around her infirmary. Sighing at the absolutely ridiculous notion that she was about to place a deadly serpent into a bed with an injured patient, Poppy levitated Salazar into Harry's bed with the instruction that it wasn't allowed to leave Harry's presence for any reason unless she was informed. As she walked over towards the Grangers, she couldn't help but look back and shiver slightly at the image of Harry Potter hissing to his familiar while gently caressing the snake's jet black scales.

Lucius Abraxas Malfoy was a man of many considerable talents. While attending Hogwarts, he used his family name, status, and considerable fortune to rise to the elite of Slytherin house. His head of house, Horace Slughorn, recognized his potential and introduced him to several important figures within the Wizengamot, Ministry, and the International Confederation of Wizards. Graduating as Head Boy in 1968 with seven NEWTs, the lowest being an EE, Lucius had several impressive job offers presented to him from practically every organization in Great Britain.

St. Mungos asked if he was interested in a healer's apprenticeship – he had laughed while reading the letter— the ministry had offered him the position of Head of the Department of Goblin Liaisons – he had burnt the letter, it wouldn't be acceptable for a Malfoy to be summoned by a Goblin– and representatives from the French and English ICW delegation had offered him a spot as a junior advisor – he had seriously considered these offers before rejecting both, he wouldn't antagonize either the French or English Ministry by selecting one over the other.

With a sizable trust account and no immediate plans for a job, Lucius left Great Britain and traveled to the continent. He spent a few months in the Malfoy summer homes in Paris and Florence, throwing parties for some acquaintances and influential wizarding families. In September of 1969, Lucius had enough of playing the role of wealthy scion to the Malfoy family and sought to make his own legacy. Throughout his years at Hogwarts, Lucius' ambition was twofold, to expand upon the already exuberant Malfoy fortune and to prove himself as a powerful wizard.

Using several contacts he had met during his well attended parties, Lucius began to heavily invest his trust account into several business opportunities, the results of which were highly lucrative. By December of 1970, Lucius had gained a reputation as a shrewd and cunning business man who always ended up on the winning side of any transaction; however, he did not command the kind of respect he once held over his fellow students at Hogwarts.

Surprisingly, it was a very old acquaintance that changed Lucius' life forever. Gerald Crabbe was three years older than him at Hogwarts, yet they had known each other from social gatherings for several years prior to attending school. It was at the Austrian Ministry Yule Ball that Lucius overheard Gerald loudly speaking about his exploits in the Central European Dueling Circuit to a large group of interested witches. Lucius had immediately pulled his old friend aside and asked him about the competition.

After a few tournaments, Lucius realized that competitive dueling was nothing like the formalized dueling club at Hogwarts. The wizards

involved in the tournaments were among the most powerful and knowledgeable in all of Europe. Lucius quickly found himself outclassed in a world where someone who had taken almost fifteen months off from casting an offensive spell couldn't compete. After embarrassing defeats in Prague, Geneva, and Vienna, Lucius retreated back to his home in Paris and began to obsessively study all types of dueling magic. After almost a two year hiatus, he eventually resurfaced in Berlin during the summer of 1974. It was in Berlin that Lucius Malfoy showed himself as a truly powerful opponent. Using vicious curses like they were nothing more than Stunners, Lucius cut, burnt, froze, and electrocuted the competition. Lucius won the 1974 European Championship in Berlin; however, he also earned the attention of an observer. An observer by the name of Romulus Rosier.

Romulus was a legend in the European Dueling Circuit, winning four straight championships before being banned for accidentally killing too many of his opponents. After seeing Lucius' impressive victory in Berlin, he notified his master, the recently declared Dark Lord Voldemort about his discovery. It took less than a week for Voldemort to look into the dueling upstart's background and decide that he could use a young, clever, business savvy pureblood amongst his Death Eaters. He sent Rosier out to contact him.

Having no love for Muggleborns and hearing rumors of the Dark Lord's power, Lucius agreed to meet with Voldemort back in England. After one meeting with the charismatic Dark Lord, Lucius was all but foaming at the mouth to be marked as Voldemort's follower.

In 1975, Lucius permanently returned to England and began to buy influence in the Ministry of Magic. It started very small with little donations to young or mid-level ministry employees; however, by 1976, Lucius had an information network which spread through every Department in the Ministry. While Lucius proved himself as a valuable resource for inside information, it was his skill with a wand that earned him the Dark Lord's praise. After leading several attacks against Diagon Alley and notable blood traitors such as the Bones and Davis families, Lucius had risen into Voldemort's inner circle, joining Bellatrix Lestrange, nee Black, his former year mate in Slytherin, as the youngest members of said group.

It was, oddly enough, Lucius' loathing of Bellatrix Lestrange that brought about his betrothal. In an internal power play to frustrate his closest competition for the Dark Lord's favor, Lucius had written to Orion Black, head of the Black family, about courting young Narcissa Black as a future wife. Orion had quickly agreed and Lucius found himself taking the beautiful Hogwarts seventh year to the 1976 Yule Ball at the Ministry of Magic.

Lucius' intent was simply to unnerve and annoy Bellatrix so that she would make a mistake during a future mission for their lord; however, much to his astonishment, Narcissa proved to be a truly amazing companion. Not only did Narcissa subtly call him out on what his intentions were, but she willingly played a part in Lucius' scheme to upset her sister. After a single night of dancing and plotting with Narcissa, Lucius knew he had found the one and asked his father to propose a marriage contract, which was quickly accepted.

Following Narcissa's graduation from Hogwarts in the spring of 1977, Lucius and Narcissa wed. To this day, Lucius could not imagine a more splendid affair than his wedding to Narcissa. His father had gone all out in preparation for his only son's wedding. The Minister of Magic himself presided over the ceremony while the Dark Lord, under polyjuice, sat in attendance. For Lucius, though, there were two Patronus worthy memories that night. The first was watching when Bellatrix, as Maid of Honor, was forced to bite her tongue so hard that blood began to pool out her mouth when the Minister asked if anyone had a reason for Narcissa and he not to be wed. The second was at the reception when his lord approached him and gave him one of the greatest gifts he would ever receive. It was a diary. A simple, leather bound diary with the words T. M. Riddle on the cover. After erecting a privacy ward and demanding an oath of silence, Voldemort informed him that the diary was a powerful object, created by the blackest of magic, and capable of restoring blood purity at Hogwarts. The Dark Lord had instructed Lucius to keep the diary safe at all costs. Lucius had never felt prouder, knowing that his lord trusted him with an object of such immeasurable power.

1981 was the pinnacle of life as far as Lucius was concerned. His son and heir, Draco, was already showing signs of magic, and more

importantly, the tide of the war had completely shifted towards the Dark Lord following a series of devastating attacks against the Carmichael, Marchbanks, McNeil, and Prewett families. Lucius' ingenious donations towards the young and mid-level ministry employees were beginning to turn out amazing results as several of his bought politicians began escalating to the position of director in certain departments. Lucius was on top of the world...until Halloween.

Halloween was the day Lucius' life forever changed. The Dark Lord had become obsessed with a prophecy that a talented young Death Eater and friend of Narcissa's, Severus Snape, had informed him of. After several months of contemplation, Voldemort announced to the inner circle that the prophecy in question was about Harry Potter and that he had a spy in place that would allow him to pass the ancient magic which protected the family.

The Dark Lord set out that night to personally kill Harry Potter; however, something had gone horribly wrong. The Dark Lord had died. Word first reached Lucius about his Lord's death from a low level Ministry flunky. The boy, barely a year out of Hogwarts, had floo'd to ask if the rumors of the Dark Lord's death were true. Lucius had been so stunned at the question that he hadn't reacted; he merely stared at the boy like he was mad.

After dismissing the young man, Lucius soon went out to find if the rumors were true and to his horror they were. Somehow the Potter brat reflected a killing curse, ending the life of the greatest sorcerer in the modern age. Several Death Eaters were in denial when told of their Lord's defeat, Bellatrix most notably; however, the quickly disappearing image of the dark mark told Lucius all he needed to know.

To make matters worse, the news about Sirius Black's betrayal broke on the 2nd of November, and Bellatrix launched a truly pointless attack on the Longbottoms the following day. Lucius knew that it would be open season on all Death Eaters now, and without his lord's powerful presence, he needed a plan to escape Azkaban. After a week of nervous planning, Lucius contacted every high ranking Death Eater that he trusted and explained his plan to escape prosecution.

Over the next few days, Lucius and two dozen other Death Eaters turned themselves in to the Department of Magical Law Enforcement after coming out of Imperius like trances. Lucius' trial was among the shortest, his bought politicians fearing that they would be implicated in giving information to Voldemort vouched for Lucius' character. He was set free with the court's sympathies. Even after the devastating defeat to his Lord, Lucius couldn't help but appreciate the look of annoyance on Albus Dumbledore's face as he read the Wizengamot's verdict.

Lucius did not allow the stigma of being one of the Dark Lord's follower's to stain his reputation, though. When the general election came about in 1984, Lucius put his money and name behind Cornelius Fudge, one of the first politicians he had ever invested in. When Fudge became Minister, Lucius reaped the benefits. Soon his name and the names of his fellow Death Eaters were back among the most influential and important in the Wizarding world. In 1985, Lucius had sat as the Minister's personal guest when Amelia Bones ascended to the rank of Head of the DMLE when seven years earlier he had personally claimed her older brother's life. By 1988, Lucius had become, along with Albus Dumbledore, Fudge's most important unofficial advisor.

Lucius took over as Head of the Malfoy family in 1990 when his father Abraxas was diagnosed with Dragon Pox at the age of 120 and was unable to continue his duties. At the age of 49, Lucius assumed the Malfoy family seat in the Wizengamot. Using his own powerful and charismatic presence, combined with his father's lifetime supply of blackmail on the senior members, Lucius quickly assumed leadership of one of the largest voting blocks in the Wizengamot. By taking control of a large standing political body in the Wizengamot, Lucius finally began to exert control over the one aspect in the Fudge regime where he was previously powerless.

Cornelius Fudge had often sought the advice of Albus Dumbledore not because he was a powerful wizard but because of the large voting block he represented in the Wizengamot. Fudge needed Dumbledore to have any chance at passing his laws. By formally representing another body in the Wizengamot, Lucius offered the Minister another option to pass his bills. Slowly, Lucius began to

whittle away at Albus Dumbledore's established influence over Fudge and the Wizengamot. By the start of summer in 1991, Lucius had increased the number of traditionalists by six members while Albus Dumbledore's reformists had lost three members to the moderates and lost another member due to illness. Cornelius, seeing the slow shift back towards traditional wizarding values, had begun to turn to Lucius more for all political issues. Lucius was on top of the world during the summer of 1991 and nothing could shake him...well nothing except Harry James Potter.

Lucius must have cursed Harry Potter's name a thousand times between 1981 and 1984; however, as his influence and prestige returned, his thoughts drifted less and less towards his old master's vanquisher. It was therefore a shock when during a seemingly inauspicious trip to Diagon Alley, Draco had introduced him to The-Boy-Who-Lived.

The boy was small, certainly smaller than your average first year, and yet when Draco informed him about Harry's views on Muggles and his Parseltongue ability, Lucius couldn't help but be intrigued by the child. The closeness Harry seemed to have with Andromeda's daughter was worrisome –the filthy blood traitor had certainly filled her daughter with her twisted beliefs – but Lucius was willing to overlook the young girl for a chance at studying the legendary Boy-Who-Lived for a while longer. It was only after Harry Potter was chosen for the brother wand to the Dark Lord that Lucius accepted that the boy could hold true power someday, and Lucius would be damned if he wouldn't have a piece of that power.

Once he returned to Malfoy Manor, Lucius spoke long into the night with Narcissa and the two of them decided to have Draco invite Harry over later in the summer.

It was an unexpected and annoying sight to see Andromeda's daughter arrive by portkey with Harry; however, Lucius was not among the most skilled political leaders in the country for nothing. He easily adjusted his facial features and welcomed her happily.

Within the first few minutes of speaking with Nymphadora Tonks, it quickly became apparent that she had no idea that Narcissa was her mother's sister and Draco her cousin. After quickly writing a message and having an elf deliver it to Narcissa, Lucius put into action an impromptu plan that would not only bring Harry further onto his side, but would also damage the relationship Andromeda had with her daughter.

The plan went off without a hitch. Lucius and Narcissa fed their niece several well designed lies about her father ignorantly insulting the Dark Lord and then breaking protocol for a proper wizard's duel, forcing his magic to kill him. Later that night, Lucius couldn't help but laugh –like the Dark Lord would ever accept a wizard's duel from a mudblood. Not only did the story make Harry Potter see the folly of inviting uneducated muggleborns into the wizarding world, but little Nymphadora Tonks actually grew to resent her mudblood father.

Of course the *crème de la crème* of on the spot manipulations during Harry's birthday party was Narcissa's shocking statement that Lily Potter might not be a mudblood. Lucius had no idea what his wife was thinking when she brought up such an absurdly stupid notion, but her idea about having the boy perform a blood purity and talent's test was absolute genius. While the tests might kill the boy, if he survived, they would have a clearer idea of what Harry Potter's magical potential was.

It was rather simple to convince Harry, who obviously wanted to know more about his family, to take the test and to grant the Malfoys access to the results. There was nothing though that could have prepared Lucius or Narcissa for the results of the boy's test. Not only was Lily Potter a pureblood, but Harry Potter was the heir to several families and possessed several rare and powerful skills. It was only after leaving the ritual chamber that Lucius decided to support the boy. If trained and manipulated properly, Harry Potter could very easily become a rallying cry for the entire pureblood movement.

Needless to say, after one year at Hogwarts Lucius couldn't have been happier with the way in which Harry was acting. He was a Slytherin, had become best friends with Draco, had several confrontations with Dumbledore, and had befriended powerful neutral

and light families such as the Zabini and Bones to avoid painting himself as a future dark wizard. The only real flaw he saw in Harry's character was his reliance upon Andromeda's daughter; however, he could not see any immediate way of separating the two without damaging his own relationship with the boy. This problem only became more complicated when it became clear that Draco had also grown close to his half-blooded cousin.

During the summer after Draco and Harry's first year, Lucius had several ideas to slowly separate Harry from Nymphadora; however, a solution literally fell into his lap. It was clear following his stay at the Tonks' that Harry was less than thrilled with Andromeda's reaction to his and Nymphadora's relationship with the Malfoy family. It was easy to convince the impressionable young man that it was Andromeda's fault that their relationship had suffered.

After seeing Nymphadora at Harry's birthday party in the Leaky Cauldron, Lucius couldn't help but smile at the noticeable change in the girl. It was a clear case of teenage rebellion and an overprotective mother which was causing his niece to act out against Andromeda, and Lucius quickly used it to his advantage. Lucius praised the girl's resourcefulness for stealing a prized relic for Harry's birthday – earning the girl's admiration– and boldly defended her against her mother when Andromeda caught her attending the party.

It was easy to manipulate the girl against her mother. The fact that Andromeda understood what he was trying to do actually made Lucius' job easier. While Andromeda reacted to his manipulations by doing everything she could to keep her daughter away from a dangerous man, Lucius appeared like the sensitive and caring uncle who was merely trying to rationalize with Nymphadora's irate mother. Needless to say, Nymphadora Tonks was slowly coming to see Lucius as a protective father figure.

The summer passed easily and Lucius was able to continue his subtle manipulations of Harry Potter. Unfortunately, Lucius was so caught up in his own plans for Harry Potter, the Minister, the Wizengamot, and the Board of Governors that he failed to realize something important. Harry Potter was growing into a bright young Slytherin.

While the boy clearly didn't see or understand any of the intricate actions Lucius had taken to shape him into the cunning, powerful, young man he was becoming, Harry did have his own goals that he was pursuing. This was made all too apparent when Harry unintentionally foiled Lucius' plot to give the youngest Weasley his master's old diary.

Lucius had waited well over a decade to put this plan in place, but finally everything was ready. With Harry and Draco as his eyes at Hogwarts and his place on the board of Governors secure, Lucius was ready to use his master's diary to resurrect the pure blood tradition at Hogwarts. The only problem Lucius had was a suitable target to give the diary to. Fate, however, chose to bless him during a trip to Diagon Alley.

Lucius had never liked Arthur Weasley. No, dislike was far too positive a word. Lucius loathed Arthur Weasley. In fact Arthur Weasley could easily be described as the antithesis of Lucius Malfoy. While Lucius was rich, ambitious, and powerful, Arthur was poor, content with a low paying job, and possessed average magical power. Arthur's ability to remain content with his pathetic existence was an incomprehensible scenario for Lucius. Normally, Lucius would have ignored such a peon of the wizarding world; however, Arthur's position as the de-facto Muggle-protector at the Ministry earned him Lucius' ire. In fact, if it wasn't for Dumbledore protecting the Weasley family, Lucius would have had the man killed years ago.

Needless to say, Lucius was disappointed with Harry protecting Arthur's daughter, yet with the diary still in place at Hogwarts, Lucius allowed Harry to play his games with the Weasley girl.

Draco and Harry's second year at Hogwarts progressed as anticipated. Despite the fact that his over-priced solicitor was unable to get Harry's guardianship usurped from Albus Dumbledore, Lucius was able to become Harry's financial guardian with the Goblins. It was purely a ceremonial position as the Goblins still managed the funds; however, the prestige that came with being in charge of The-Boy-Who-Lived's fortune more than made up the court cost –not to mention the damage to Dumbledore's reputation.

The only thing at Hogwarts that wasn't going to plan was the lack of a pureblood resurgence. By the start of December, Lucius was almost positive that the Granger girl had either lost or not used his master's diary. The mere thought that Potter had lost possibly the most valuable gift Lucius had ever been given by his lord was blood-boiling. Lucius was planning on teaching The-Boy-Who-Interfered a well deserved lesson in dueling over the Christmas holiday when the rumors of the Chamber of Secrets opening first reached Lucius' ears.

Lucius had written to Draco and, much to his surprise, found that the petrification of the mudblood Creevey was not the first time the students had heard of the Chamber that year. After scolding Draco for keeping things from him over the Christmas holiday, Lucius forced Dumbledore to admit to the Board of Governors about the Chamber's existence. The frequency of the attacks over the course of the year, combined with the fuss Lucius made over Draco's assault and subsequent polyjuicing, insured Dumbledore's suspension.

By the end of May, Lucius was positive that Hogwarts would be temporarily closing. His master's promise of a pureblood resurgence was quickly becoming a reality as half-bloods and mudbloods were struck down by the 'monster' within the Chamber of Secrets. Lucius was so assured of Hogwart's closure that he began subtly revealing a plan to sympathetic school governors about the possibility of re-opening the school the following year without mudbloods.

It was therefore with a triumphant feeling that Lucius received a floo call from Hogwarts stating that a mudblood had been taken into the Chamber by the heir of Slytherin and that the school would be closing. What Lucius had not anticipated was that the news of the school's closure would panic the neutrals on the Board of Governors. In an emergency vote, the Board of Governors re-instated Dumbledore to the position of headmaster. Upon arriving at Hogwarts, Lucius was met by Dumbledore and informed that Harry had disappeared, presumably into the Chamber of Secrets.

Harry's reemergence from the Chamber of Secrets with the Granger girl was among the most frustrating nights of Lucius' life. Not only did Harry manage to stop the Basilisk, but worst of all, the Granger girl

survived the ordeal. Lucius was certain that within a few weeks of sorting through the girl's memories, Dumbledore would have figured out who was responsible for giving the mudblood his master's diary. It was now a race against time to find a suitable scapegoat.

Saturday, May 1st, Hogwarts

It had taken three days of swallowing the vilest tasting potions, being poked and prodded with a wand, and countless healing spells before Harry was released from the hospital wing. The after-effects of the Cruciatus had only lasted thirty-two hours, but Madam Pomfrey was apparently set against letting him go until she was satisfied that he was 100 percent healed.

Harry had planned on spending his first day free from the hospital wing finding out what the rumors were regarding what happened to him in the Chamber. He knew that Draco and Blaise, as his two closest friends, were probably being asked to confirm any ridiculous things being spread. Hopefully, they were dutifully taking note of what the Hogwarts population seemed to believe.

As Harry turned the corner towards the entrance to the dungeons, any thoughts of meeting with Draco and Blaise quickly vanished. Striding up from the dungeons was a very determined looking Lucius Malfoy. The narrowing of Lucius' eyes and the quickening of his pace told Harry that he was the reason for Lucius' voyage into Hogwarts' dungeons. Harry took a moment to take in the appearance of his best friend's father. Lucius' normally perfect robes were slightly wrinkled and the small lines under his eyes told the story of someone who had been very busy and not gotten a lot of sleep of late.

"You're up," Lucius noted.

Caught off guard by Lucius' blasé tone, Harry simply replied, "I am."

"Good," Lucius said before thrusting an invisibility cloak at Harry.

Harry took one look at the cloak before asking, "How did you get this?"

"It was placed on top of your trunk in one of our guest bedrooms at Malfoy Manor. Now be silent and follow me," Lucius instructed before tapping his head with his wand.

Harry watched as Lucius' body slowly faded from sight, leaving only a slightly visible haze where his body previously stood. Harry followed the slight visual distortion down to the lowermost level of the dungeons and into an unused Potions classroom.

Once inside, Harry heard a voice call out, "I say who's there?"

Harry turned around and saw a lone portrait of a wizard brewing a potion looking around the room suspiciously. The only response the portrait received though was a yellow bolt of magic striking it, causing the wizard in the picture to yell out in horror as the canvas immediately burnt away, giving the wizard no time to flee to another picture.

"What spell was that?" Harry asked after removing his invisibility cloak.

"Be silent," Lucius replied icily. "Muffliato, colloportus."

"Alright, what's going on?" Harry demanded.

"I just wanted to have a chat, Harry, one that the esteemed Headmaster of this institution wouldn't find out about," Lucius replied silkily.

Harry just looked to the remains of the portrait and back to Lucius before a feeling of dread hit him. "Do the portraits report to the headmaster?"

"Indeed," Lucius replied coolly.

Harry had to hold back the bile that was quickly trying to make its way up his throat. He and Salazar had killed Lockhart in view of a portrait. He didn't remember much about it other than passing it on the way to Myrtle's bathroom. Did it already tell Dumbledore? Had it actually

seen or heard anything? If it did, why wasn't Dumbledore grilling him about Lockhart's death?

"I suppose you're wondering why I found it so important that we speak uninterrupted," Lucius commented, snapping Harry back to the reality of his situation.

"Yes," Harry answered as he fingered his wand in his pocket. He was sure Lucius wouldn't...attack him, but the Gargoyle in him was practically screaming caution.

Lucius' pale grey eyes held no sympathy or compassion; instead, they showed anger and resentment. After what seemed like an eternity, Lucius finally said, "We must find a way to curb your Gryffindor tendencies, Potter."

"What?" Harry replied confused.

"Think, boy!" Lucius barked out.

"I don't understand," Harry countered testily.

"You let the mudblood bitch live," Lucius snarled cruelly.

"Herm...Granger? What does she have to do with..."

"Everything boy, she is the key to everything! The old man has certainly already gotten a copy of her memories from the summer. I don't think I need to tell you that it will be bad for the both of us when the headmaster finds what he is looking for," Lucius hissed.

Harry could only nod his head. If the headmaster discovered he was responsible for the entire ordeal, things being bad for him would be the understatement of the century. "Do you have a plan?" Harry asked hopefully.

"I do," Lucius responded curtly.

"What do you need me to do," Harry asked hesitantly.

"To listen and follow my orders without question," Lucius demanded.

Harry nodded his head in resignation and listened to Lucius' plan.

Sunday, May 9th, Headmaster's Office

"Hello Harry, don't bother taking a seat," Dumbledore said as soon as Harry entered the room.

Harry nodded his head and watched as the Headmaster levitated a large crate off the floor and into the air behind him.

"I believe that it is time we deal with the issue of the Basilisk under the school," Dumbledore said, his eyes twinkling.

"Oh...yeah, I guess we should," Harry said, slightly relieved.

"I must say I am looking forward to seeing the Chamber of Secrets," Dumbledore said as he levitated a large crate and walked out of his office, Harry following behind him.

"Sir, can I ask what is in the box?" Harry asked.

"But of course, Harry," Dumbledore said with his usual twinkle.

Seeing that the headmaster wasn't about to elaborate, Harry asked, "Sir, what is in the box?"

"Why, roosters, of course. The crow of a rooster is the easiest way to kill a Basilisk, after all," Dumbledore said, smiling brightly.

Harry said nothing more as he tried to wrap his mind around the fact that a giant snake's greatest weakness came from a bird no bigger than a foot.

The remainder of the trip to the girls' bathroom was silent, except for Dumbledore whistling pleasantly as if he went to go kill a sixty foot snake every other day.

When they entered the bathroom, Harry led Dumbledore over to the entrance of the Chamber and hissed, "Open."

When the wall had finished opening, Dumbledore smiled and said, "I haven't been on a slide in over seventy years, Harry. I will see you at the bottom."

Harry was about to tell him to wait, but Dumbledore had already jumped down the pipe and his laughter echoed back up to the bathroom.

The man is most certainly insane, Harry thought before hissing, "Stairs."

A few minutes later, Harry reached the bottom of the staircase and found Dumbledore smiling brightly, his robes covered in filth from the pipe.

"I must admit that I did not expect for the grime on the pipe to be magically resistant to the Scourgify charm," Dumbledore said with a smile.

"I was going to tell you that there were stairs, sir," Harry said as he gestured to the staircase that he had just used.

"Hmm, I must admit that even had I known, I would have used the pipe. I haven't had that much fun in some time," Dumbledore replied.

Harry could only shake his head as he led Dumbledore to the entrance to the chamber.

"The Basilisk is through here," Harry said.

"Ah, of course, if you will give me one moment before you open the door, Harry," Dumbledore said as he opened the crate full of Roosters.

Harry leaned in slightly, wondering what magic Dumbledore was about to perform.

"Imperio," Dumbledore said strongly, causing Harry to gawk at the headmaster.

"I take it that you understand what this spell does, now," Dumbledore said knowingly.

"Yes sir, but I thought it carried a lifetime sentence in Azkaban if you used it," Harry said.

"Normally that is the case, Harry; however, using the Imperius curse on an animal does not require the emotional intent that the curse requires on a more intelligent being. I would have rather used any other spell, but only the Imperius curse will make certain that they crow when I tell them to," Dumbledore explained patiently.

"I don't understand. Emotional intent?" Harry asked faking ignorance.

"The Unforgivables are so named because while there are many dark spells that can cause harm, these three require a person to want to cause the spell. For the Imperius, the person casting the spell on another human being must want to totally control them. That emotional intent is not required when placing the spell on an animal, however," Dumbledore explained as he took out a blindfold and tied it around his eyes.

"So, does that mean using the Unforgivables on animals is...legal?" Harry asked hesitantly as Dumbledore began tying a blindfold around his eyes.

"Unfortunately, Harry, it is. The law only states the Unforgivables carry a sentence in Azkaban when they are used on another sentient being. It is a terrible inconsistency in the law that has allowed many dark wizards to practice these horrid spells with impunity," Dumbledore said gravely. "Now, Harry, please open the door."

After taking a moment to digest all that Dumbledore had just told him, Harry hissed 'Open' in parseltongue.

"It's open, sir," Harry said.

"Excellent. Is the Basilisk nearby?" Dumbledore asked.

'Hello? Are you here?' Harry called out.

There was a slight rumbling before a loud hissing responded, 'Isss that old man the best you can find for me to eat? The man looksss sssick.'

"It's here sir, and it thinks I brought you for it to eat," Harry replied.

"Oh dear. Well, I suppose I should stop it before I become lunch. Crow!" Dumbledore commanded, causing the six roosters under the curse to immediately crow.

While Harry could not see the Basilisk due to the poor lighting, he was able to hear the creature scream out in agony for what seemed like an eternity before there was a loud thump as it died.

"I think it's dead," Harry said.

"Agreed," Dumbledore said as he took off his blindfold. "I believe that you have enough bad memories of this place, Harry. I can have Fawkes take Severus back here to collect any necessary ingredients from the Basilisk."

"Sir, Mr. Malfoy told me that the scales of a Basilisk were very valuable. Do you think that I might be able to keep some?" Harry asked.

"Do not worry, Harry, typically when a dangerous magical creature is killed, the person who kills it is allowed to do with the creature as he wishes. Mr. Malfoy was rather insistent that since we would not be able to reach the Chamber of Secrets without your help that you be given at least half of all items which could be sold commercially. Since Basilisks are very rare, I dare say you have just increased your already large family fortune. I would also suggest not selling the Basilisk scales. They can be used to craft very magically resistant armor. With Voldemort still alive, you should take all precautions," Dumbledore said.

"I'll remember that, sir," Harry said.

Tuesday May 11th, Great Hall

Harry, Draco, and Blaise entered the Great Hall and made their way to the Slytherin table.

"So, did your father get us permission to be there when they wake Tonks and Ginny up?" Harry asked.

Draco put some sausage onto his plate before saying, "Father took care of it. He said it was actually easier than he thought. The Governors were told what really happened and they are happy that you were able to save Granger and stop the Basilisk from attacking. I personally can't imagine why they are glad she didn't die, but they are."

"Gee, I wonder why the Board is glad that a student didn't die, Draco. Could it be because it would hurt the school's reputation?" Blaise said sarcastically.

"So what time are we supposed to go to the Hospital wing?" Harry asked.

Draco unfolded a letter and a moment later said, "After our last lesson."

The three boys fell into a comfortable silence as they ate their breakfast. Soon though, Blaise announced that it was time to go to Herbology, and they got up and left the Great Hall.

When Harry entered the greenhouse, the first thing he noticed was Hermione sitting at a desk with Neville going over a Herbology book.

"Ohhh no, she's still here," Draco said as soon as he saw Hermione.

Harry had to physically stop himself from hitting Draco as the Gargoyle snarled in anger at the insult.

"Piss off, Malfoy," Neville spat.

Draco faced Neville and dismissively said, "Be silent, squib. I want to know what the mudblood is still doing here. Do your parents care so little about you that they actually decided to let you attend a school where you almost died?"

"Leave Hermione alone, Draco," Harry growled out, alleviating himself of the headache the Gargoyle was causing.

"Mr. Malfoy, that will be thirty points from Slytherin. If you continue to bother either Mr. Longbottom or Ms. Granger, it'll be detention for the rest of the year! Now take your seat," Sprout said angrily as she entered the room.

"Blood traitor," Draco muttered as the professor turned her back, "and what the hell was that, Harry?"

"Just leave Hermione alone," Harry said seriously.

After shooting his friend a very suspicious glance, Draco huffed and walked over to his seat.

Harry and Blaise rolled their eyes at Draco's attitude and took their seats near the back of the room. Harry had just put his things down when he was joined by a red faced Neville.

"You alright?" Harry asked.

"She shouldn't have to put up with him, especially after what happened to her," Neville replied with a little bark to his voice.

"Are you talking about Herm...Granger?" Harry asked.

"No, I'm talking about Nott. Of course Hermione," Neville said sarcastically

"Aren't we testy this morning, Longbottom." Harry said with a smirk.

"She almost died, Potter," Neville said incredulously, "She shouldn't have to put up with him in her first class."

“Hmm,” Harry said neutrally.

As if sensing that Harry didn't have a comeback, Neville decided to keep talking. “Hermione told me what really happened,” he said, causing Harry to look up from his Herbology book.

“Did she?” Harry asked.

“Yeah. I dropped off her homework while she was still in the hospital wing. When I gave it to her, she acted like everything was fine so I left. I was halfway back to the Gryffindor common room when I realized that I accidentally gave her my library book. It was almost curfew so I rushed back to the hospital wing. When I entered the hospital wing, I found Hermione trying to do the animation charm that we learned in February...she couldn't do it, and she started to cry. I didn't know what else to do, so...so I gave her a hug. When she finished crying, she told me all about You-Know-Who's diary and how he was possessing her. I told her that I didn't blame her for what happened, but that she should keep it to herself. She told me that you knew what really happened,” Neville said very quietly.

“I know what happened, but why couldn't she do the animation charm?” Harry asked truly curious.

“She...she told me that she has blank spots. She can't remember ever learning the charm,” Neville said sadly.

“Really?” Harry asked, suddenly realizing that Lucius' plan might not be the only option available to him.

“I've been tutoring her the last week to catch her up on everything for her Herbology final. I know McGonagall, Flitwick, Snape, and even Dumbledore have been trying to help her, but because it's so close to exams they don't have a lot of time. She's really nervous that even if her parents let her come back, she'll have ruined her grades,” Neville admitted.

“So that's why this is her first class then? She's just now catching up,” Harry said more to himself than to Neville.

"Exactly, she's been killing herself trying to catch up. That's why I don't want Draco to bother her now. Can you please talk to him?" Neville practically begged.

"No problem Neville, I'll talk to him after class," Harry said honestly.

Neville paled suddenly and blurted out, "Don't tell him what I told you."

Harry couldn't help but grin at Neville. "What do you mean?"

"Harry, please. Don't tell Malfoy about Hermione having trouble remembering stuff. It would kill her if people found out. You know how she is about school," Neville said adamantly.

After a moment's pause, Harry said, "Very well."

Neville appraised Harry for a few seconds before saying, "Thanks."

Harry spent the rest of Herbology taking notes about what to expect on his end of year exam. When the class ended, Harry quickly gathered his things and made his way over to Hermione and Draco's table. "Draco let's go, I need to talk to you about something," Harry said.

"I agree the smell in this part of the greenhouse is particularly bad," Draco said as his eyes flashed to Hermione, who looked like she was torn between crying and hexing him.

"Whatever, Draco. Let's go," Harry said before quickly exiting the greenhouse with Draco and Blaise following him. Harry led the two other Slytherins to a secluded section of the grounds.

"What are we doing over here, Harry? This is almost in reach of the Whomping Willow," Blaise said curiously.

Harry quickly looked around, took out his wand, and said, "Sorry Blaise I need to talk to Draco in private. Stupefy."

The stunning spell caught Blaise completely off-guard and hit him squarely in the chest.

"Did you have to stun him?" Draco asked.

Harry didn't answer, he just waved his wand in a circle. When he finished a silver dome formed around the three boys before vanishing.

"What was that?"

"Privacy spell. Even though you can't see it, there is an invisible dome surrounding us. Anyone who is close enough to hear us will only hear a buzzing sound in their ears," Harry said.

"Why did you stun Blaise then? If he wouldn't have been able to..." Draco asked.

"Draco, what I'm about to tell you stays between us, understand? Your father knows, but he isn't going to be telling anyone," Harry said.

"Alright," Draco said slowly.

"Draco, you know how your Dad told you how Granger was actually being possessed by the Dark Lord?" Harry asked.

"Yes," Draco replied hesitantly.

"What your father didn't tell you is that the book that allowed the Dark Lord to possess Hermione was a book he owned. Your father tried to give it to Ginny in Diagon Alley when we saw her in the bookstore," Harry said.

"What," Draco said horrified.

"Obviously, Ginny didn't get the diary. I saw what your father did and took it out of her cauldron," Harry said.

"Thank Merlin you did, Harry. If Ginny had been...wait, how did Granger get it, then?" Draco asked.

"I gave it to her when your father and Arthur Weasley were fighting," Harry said.

Draco looked at Harry for a second before laughing. "Oh Harry, that's too good, way to stick it to the mudblood," he said.

The Gargoyle's rage quickly overwhelmed him and Harry slashed his wand sending a jet of fire directly at Draco's face. Draco had to immediately dive to the ground to avoid having his face scorched.

While Draco was doing his best to avoid being cooked, Harry viciously slammed the Gargoyle back in his mind and tried to gain some resemblance of control. As Draco was picking himself up off the dirt, Harry managed to subdue his volatile Animagus.

"What the hell is your problem!" Draco snarled as soon as he was up.

"Shut up," Harry practically hissed, "Draco, this isn't funny. Dumbledore is trying to help Hermione figure out who gave her the diary. Hopefully, he won't ever figure out who gave it to her, but if he does, both your father and I will be in serious trouble."

Draco paled as he realized the seriousness of the situation. "So...what exactly do you need to talk to me about?" he asked.

"I'm going to help Hermione pass her finals, and I need you to mail this to your father," Harry said as he presented a folded piece of parchment to Draco.

"Huh?" Draco asked confused.

"Neville told me today that Granger has blank spots from when the Dark Lord possessed her. Apparently both Flitwick and McGonagall are trying to catch her up, but they don't have a lot of free time with it being so close to finals. I figured if I help her, as well as any other student that was petrified, I can always tell Dumbledore that I didn't know the diary was dangerous, and that someone else gave it to me. Hopefully he'll see my helping of Hermione as me feeling bad for what I inadvertently caused," Harry said, refusing to admit, even to himself, that a part of him was trying to make it up to Hermione.

Draco nodded his head. "Yeah...yeah that's a good idea. Why do I need to mail my father a blank piece of parchment for you though?"

"It's not blank, Draco, just charmed so that only he can read it. Besides, if I sent a letter to your father it would look suspicious, but if you do it..." Harry trailed off knowing that Draco had gotten the point.

"I suppose you're right. Can you tell me what this says, though?" Draco asked holding up the blank piece of parchment.

Harry gritted his teeth as he felt the Gargoyle's annoyance at being questioned...again. "Basically, it tells your dad what I'm planning to do and to work it into his plan."

Draco nodded his head at the vague answer and seeing that his friend was starting to get bothered at his questions simply said, "Very well, I'll go to the Owlery now. Save me a seat at lunch. Oh, and don't forget to enervate Blaise."

Harry nodded his head and watched as his friend quickly walked back towards the castle entrance. He took his wand out and canceled the privacy spell before pointing it at Blaise, saying, "Enervate."

Blaise woke up with a slight gasp of air. "What the hell, Potter!" Blaise snapped before reaching back and rubbing his head where it hit the ground.

"Sorry, Blaise," Harry said as he gave him a hand up.

"You know you could have just asked for some privacy," Blaise grumbled.

"True, but if someone saw me tell you that I had to talk to Draco in private, they might have tried to find out what I was keeping secret," Harry pointed out.

"Still," Blaise said as he started looking around. "Wait, where is Draco?" he asked.

"He's going to send a letter," Harry said.

"I don't suppose you're going to tell me what the letter is about - or will following that line of questioning get me obliterated?" Blaise said sarcastically.

"Please, Flitwick said I can't learn the memory charm till next year," Harry said with a smirk that Blaise was a little intimidated by.

"Merlin help us when you do learn how to obliviate people," Blaise muttered quietly to himself.

Great Hall, Hogwarts

Harry and Blaise entered the Great Hall and found Draco already at the Slytherin table.

"Finished already?" Harry said challengingly, the underlying threat of what would happen if Draco procrastinated sending the letter was obvious.

"Your elf was kind enough to get the letter to father," Draco said.

"And how long has my elf been acting as your express owl for you?" Harry asked after sitting down.

"She apparently sensed that you needed a letter taken. I was actually surprised when she popped into our dorm room, but it saved me a trip to the owlery," Draco said.

"It takes a really smart elf to sense their master's needs," Blaise commented.

Harry smirked; he was again pleased by his selection in a servant.

"Do you think Salazar could eat Dobby and pick out a better elf as a replacement?" Draco asked curiously, causing Harry to laugh and Salazar to poke his head out of Harry's robes.

'What does the rabbit want?' Salazar asked.

'Nothing my friend. He just wantsss to know if you would eat hisss housse elf and pick out a good one for him like you did for me,' Harry replied.

'I will not eat an elf, but I will pick out a pathetically weak elf for the rabbit if given the chance,' Salazar hissed as he slid back down into Harry's robes.

"Sorry Draco, I wouldn't count on Salazar helping you out unless you want him to pick out the weakest elf in the lot," Harry said with a broad smile.

"Like I would want that fat snake picking an elf for me anyway..." Draco grumbled as he stabbed a piece of chicken with his fork.

Harry stopped listening to Draco though when he saw professors Dumbledore, McGonagall, Snape, and Flitwick enter the Great Hall. Deciding that this would be his best chance to speak to them, he got up and met them just before they reached the staff table.

"Professors, may I have a word in private?" Harry said courteously.

"Must you interrupt our lunches, Potter? After all, we only get a few breaks a day to enjoy a conversation away from students," Snape drawled.

"Severus, what kind of educators would we be though if we didn't make ourselves available to our students?" Dumbledore said with a smile.

"Headmaster, don't you think allowing Potter to pull three heads of house and the headmaster into an impromptu meeting during our lunch hour will only cause his inflated ego to expand?" Snape said bluntly.

"Now, now, Severus, I'm sure whatever Harry needs to tell us will be important," Dumbledore said.

"It had better, Potter, or else I'll have you scrubbing cauldrons for the last two weeks of term," Snape said menacingly.

"It is important, sir, is there a place nearby we can talk in private?" Harry asked.

"Of course, Harry, follow me," Dumbledore said.

Harry, Flitwick, McGonagall, and Snape followed Dumbledore into a side door to behind the staff table. The room was about the same size as a standard classroom, but instead of desks it had a modest sized table in the middle.

"Please take a seat. Tipsee!" Dumbledore called out.

There was a slight pop and a house elf appeared. "Yes, Professor Dumblydore?"

"Tipsee if you could bring some lunch for professors Snape, McGonagall, and Flitwick, as well as for Mr. Potter and I, that would be splendid," Dumbledore said.

"Oh, right away, headmaster," Tipsee said as she disappeared. A few moments later, several elves appeared in the room, set the table, and had several plates of food in front of everyone.

"Well, Severus, at least you won't miss lunch now," Flitwick said happily.

"True, but the company is still suspect," Snape said as he glared at Harry.

"Now, now, Severus, be sociable. What did you wish to speak to all of us about, Mr. Potter?" Dumbledore asked.

"Er...well, sir, Neville told me that Hermione has blanks spots in her memory, is that true?" Harry asked.

Dumbledore appeared to hesitate before saying, "Indeed it is Harry. I have found no way of recovering her memories."

"I-I'd like to help, sir," Harry said slowly.

"Arrogance! Surely you all can see it. He is just like his father! Do you believe you can do a better job at returning Granger's memories than the headmaster, Potter?" Snape spat.

"Well, sir, I wasn't talking about returning her memories," Harry barked back angrily as the table and all the contents on it started to rattle.

"Harry, Severus, both of you need to calm down. Harry, remember what happened the last time you lost control of yourself," Flitwick said seriously.

Both Harry and Snape quickly did their best to calm themselves at the reminder of Harry's destruction of the Hospital Wing.

"How do you want to help Miss Granger, Harry?" Dumbledore asked trying to refocus the conversation.

"Neville told me that a lot of teachers are busy because finals are getting closer. Since professor McGonagall and Flitwick are both busy I'd like permission to tutor her in Charms and Transfiguration," Harry said.

"I was of the opinion you and Ms. Granger didn't get along, Harry?" McGonagall said almost daring him to challenge her on the fact.

"Well...I don't really like her, but I don't want her to fail out," Harry lied. He could practically feel the Gargoyle smirking in the back of his mind at that statement.

"And when did this new opinion of Ms. Granger appear?" McGonagall asked shrewdly.

"Probably around the time I saw the Dark Lord possessing her," Harry said, ending any further protest by McGonagall.

"Well, I have no problem with you helping Ms. Granger, Harry, but you certainly don't need our permission to offer your help to her," Dumbledore said calmly.

"But I do. I need you to make Hermione accept my help. We don't really get along and she'd probably think I am just going to spend the time insulting her or something," Harry said.

"Are you, Mr. Potter? Because if you are, I will tell you right now..." McGonagall said sharply.

"I won't, ma'am, I'll even ask Neville to come along and help. I think he's helping her in Herbology anyway," Harry said.

"Why?" Snape asked after everyone was silent for a moment.

"What do you mea..." Harry started.

"You're a Slytherin, Potter. As much as I hate to admit it, you don't do things because it's the right thing to do. You have an ulterior motive and I want to know what it is," Snape demanded.

When Harry saw that Flitwick, Dumbledore, and McGonagall were thinking along the same lines as Snape, Harry said, "I plan on tutoring Tonks and Ginny as well in order to catch them up. Since tutoring at least three people in all different year levels in more than one subject will be incredibly time consuming and difficult, I was hoping that it could count as my tutoring for next year," he said hoping that they would believe that.

"What?" Flitwick asked the question everyone was thinking.

"Do you think I like helping annoying Gryffindors who can't do a proper levitation charm? I don't ever want to tutor someone I can't stand ever again," Harry said with some bite in his voice.

"Harry, you do realize that tutoring is optional, don't you?" Dumbledore asked sounding confused.

"Of course I do," Harry snapped with irritation. "But I know if I don't do it, certain people would never let me live it down as well as remind me every day for the rest of the year," he said making sure everyone noticed he was looking at Snape.

"Very well Harry. You are probably running late to your next class; why don't you let myself and your professors take a moment to think about it. I will send an elf to let you know our decision soon," Dumbledore said.

"Thank you, sir," Harry said as he got up and exited the room.

As soon as the door was closed, Snape said, "He's lying."

"About what? You constantly reminding him of his dereliction of duty by not tutoring people or his reason for wanting to tutor Ms. Granger?" Dumbledore asked fixing Snape with a penetrating stare.

"Both," Snape said bluntly.

"Please, Severus, you wouldn't even let the boy explain himself before you called him arrogant," Flitwick snapped, defending his favorite student.

"I can't believe I'm saying this, but I agree with Severus, Filius. Mr. Potter is lying to us about why he wants to tutor Ms. Granger," McGonagall said.

"How can you be certain, Minerva? Perhaps seeing Ms. Granger being possessed by Voldemort did in fact cause Harry to rethink his opinions," Dumbledore said.

"Albus, the boy used a very dangerous spell against Ms. Granger's father not five minutes after rescuing her from the Chamber of Secrets! He has not changed his opinions about muggleborns and Muggles. I don't know why he wants to tutor Ms. Granger, but he has an ulterior motive," McGonagall said.

"Perhaps, Minerva, but if Harry is serious it would only help the girl. Let's all be honest, we do not have the time to catch Hermione up on

everything she missed. Our schedules are too tight this late in the semester. Harry has the time to give to her, and if we approach Mr. Longbottom to make sure that Harry is staying polite, then we should consider this," Flitwick said.

"I suppose you have a point, Filius, but I can't help but wonder why Mr. Potter truly wants to do this," McGonagall said.

"I believe this is a situation where we must consider that the good Mr. Potter's help would bring Ms. Granger outweighs whatever ulterior motive Harry might have," Dumbledore said pensively.

"Very well Albus, but I don't like it," McGonagall said.

Defense Against The Dark Arts Classroom, Hogwarts

Harry opened the door to the defense classroom only to hear a gruff voice say, "No, no, no, no, no! Merlin, didn't Lockhart teach you lot anything this year?"

"Actually, professor, he didn't," Harry said with a smirk.

The man turned around and Harry instinctively dropped to the ground to avoid the spell that shot out of the man's wand.

"Stupefy!" Harry shouted from the floor.

"Protego," the man barked, deflecting the spell.

"Serpensortia," Harry said as a jet black snake shot out of his wand towards the man; however, the man simply waved his wand and the black serpent disappeared in a puff of smoke.

"Stupefy, Impedimenta, Expelliarmus, Stupefy!" the man barked, sending spell after spell at Harry.

Harry dove out of the way of the first two spells before shouting "protego" to shield himself from the last two; however, much to Harry's shock, the disarming spell broke his shield charm and a

moment later the stunning caused him to be knocked unconscious before he hit the floor.

"Ugh, my head," Harry groaned when he woke up.

"Up you go, Potter," the man said as he roughly grabbed Harry's arm and pulled him onto his feet.

Once Harry was back on his feet, he got his first look at his attacker. Every inch of the man's face and skin seemed to be scarred. His mouth looked like a diagonal gash, and a large chunk of his nose was missing; however, it was the man's eyes that made him frightening. One of them was small, dark, and beady. The other was large, round as a coin, and a vivid, electric blue. The blue eye was moving ceaselessly, without blinking, and was rolling up, down, and from side to side, quite independently of the normal eye--and then it rolled right over, pointing into the back of the man's head, so that all they could see was whiteness.

"Who are you?" Harry asked in shock.

"I'm your interim Defense against the Dark Arts teacher, Alastor Moody. Now, can you tell me what you did wrong in that duel, Potter?" Moody demanded.

"I-I got stunned. My shield didn't hold," Harry said.

"Wrong! You were overconfident. You thought your shield would be able to hold up against my spells. Well, let me tell you something, Potter. Not every spell is equal for each person. That shield probably would hold up against 95 percent of the students at this school judging by how my disarming spell couldn't get through, but when faced against an adult wizard with any sort of power, it's nothing all that impressive. You should have kept dodging. Lesson learned. Take your seat," Moody barked.

Harry nodded his head and walked down the aisle. He was three seats away from Draco and Blaise when he felt the magic around the room start to build. Instinctively he dropped to the floor just in time to see an orange and yellow curse fly right over his head. He quickly

turned around with his wand drawn, only to see Moody grinning like mad at him.

"Wonderful reflexes, Potter, take 20 points for Slytherin!" Moody said triumphantly.

Harry kept his wand aimed at the man as he slowly walked backwards into the empty seat next to where Blaise and Draco were sitting.

"What the bloody hell was that?" Harry hissed.

"That's Alastor Moody, the world's craziest Auror. Dumbledore got him to teach defense for the last two weeks of school," Draco said quietly.

"The man is insane," Harry hissed.

"Yeah, well, at least you were able to dodge his first attack when you came into the room," Blaise said.

"What do you mean?" Harry asked.

"Everyone else was stunned as soon as they entered. Some sort of rubbish about vigilance," Blaise said shaking his head.

"Potter!" Moody barked causing Harry to pale slightly.

"Yes, sir?" Harry asked.

"Tell me what you think of Lockhart," Moody asked.

"He was the single worst defense teacher this school has probably ever had. He made us read his books in class and then would grade us based upon how much emotion we put into the readings," Harry scowled.

"Understood. Since this is the fourth class where I believe the grading is not a true reflection of your skills, I'm going to be speaking to Albus

later today about having the defense marks stricken this year," Moody said as several people cheered.

"However, you will have to pass a final that I give out at the end of the semester..." Moody said as a small elf appeared next to him with a soft pop.

"Stupefy!" Moody barked causing the creature to pop away only to appear back on the desk.

"What do you want?" Moody asked the elf.

"Headmaster Dumblydoor would like to see Mr. Longbottom, Mr. Potter, and Ms. Granger," The house elf said warily.

"Doesn't a staff member usually fetch students?" Moody asked as he narrowed his eyes suspiciously.

"No staff member would enter professor Mad-Eye's room to get them," the elf said timidly.

"They probably don't want me to make sure that they are practicing Constant Vigilance! Potter, Granger, Longbottom get your stuff and get out of here," Moody barked.

Harry quickly gathered up everything as quickly as he could. "Enjoy the rest of the class you guys," Harry said with a smirk and quickly left the classroom.

"Lucky bastard, I wish I could get out of this," Draco grumbled.

"Even if it means going to a meeting with Longbottom and Granger?" Blaise asked curiously.

Draco watched as Moody sent a stinging hex at Nott before saying, "Yes."

Outside the Headmaster's Office, Hogwarts

Harry stopped walking in front of the Gargoyle that led to the Headmaster's office. "Ice Mice," Harry said; however, the Gargoyle remained in place.

"Ice Mice? Really, Potter, I highly doubt that the Headmaster of Hogwarts..." Hermione started.

"That was his password a few days ago, Hermione," Harry replied putting forth an effort to be cordial and appease the Gargoyle in his head.

"You're sure this is the entrance to his office?" Neville asked.

"Yes, Longbottom, now start guessing candies, that's what all his passwords are. Blood Quills, Sugar Quills, Lemon Drops, Cockroach Cluster..." Harry said as the Gargoyle sprung to life and moved out of the way revealing the spiral staircase.

"Cockroach Cluster was his password?" Hermione said in shock.

"I know the man clearly has issues," Harry said as he strode forward, quickly followed by Hermione and Neville.

"You shouldn't say something like that about him, Potter. He is still the most gifted wizard in the world," Hermione said sharply.

Neville walked forward to knock on the door after they ascended the spiral staircase, but before he could Dumbledore's voice called out, "Enter."

"I think there is a ward that lets him know people are outside his office," Harry said as he opened the door and entered the office.

"Hello, Mr. Potter, Ms. Granger, Mr. Longbottom, please come in," Dumbledore said kindly.

Harry took the furthest chair to the left and made sure he avoided looking at Dumbledore's Phoenix; however, Hermione and Neville were both instantly taken with the bird.

"Professor Dumbledore, is that what I think it is?" Hermione asked, pointing at Fawkes.

"Well, if you think it is a Phoenix, then you would be correct, Ms. Granger," Dumbledore said with a smile

"Wow, a Phoenix. My gran said you had one, but I never thought I'd get to see it," Neville said reverently.

Fawkes gave a thrill of appreciation that caused Hermione, Dumbledore, and Neville to smile. Harry, though, felt as if he was staring right into the eyes of the Basilisk again. Every muscle in his body tensed and he felt a sudden urge to draw his wand and hex the bird. He suppressed that desire, however, when he saw Dumbledore staring at him with narrowed eyes.

"I assume that this is about what we talked about earlier, isn't it?" Harry asked.

"Indeed. Ms. Granger, it is the belief of the staff that you will have the best chance at succeeding on your end of year exams if you are tutored by Mr. Potter," Dumbledore said.

"NO! No, I-I mean, no, I'm doing fine, sir, I don't need any help," Hermione said quickly.

"My dear, Mr. Longbottom took it upon himself to reveal to Mr. Potter your problem remembering parts of the year," Dumbledore said softly.

"Why, Neville?" Hermione demanded, turning her teary eyes to look questionably at Neville.

"I-I thought that he could get Malfoy to leave you alone. You didn't need Malfoy bothering you..." Neville said weakly.

"So you went to Potter. The same Potter that put my father in the hospital wing and who hates me!" Hermione said angrily before turning back to the Headmaster, "Professor, no offense, but I don't want to be ridiculed for the last two weeks of class."

"Miss Granger, Mr. Potter assures us that he will not do that; however, professor McGonagall has informed us of how your relationship with Mr. Potter is...strenuous. So we have decided to ask Mr. Longbottom to sit in on Mr. Potter's tutoring sessions with you. If Mr. Longbottom believes Mr. Potter is not helping you, then he will report it to us and Mr. Potter will be punished," Dumbledore said seriously.

Hermione looked rather hesitant, but ultimately nodded her head.

"Good. Now, you will meet Mr. Potter every day from three to six pm to work on Transfiguration and Charms. You will then work with Mr. Longbottom on Herbology from six to seven. I understand you are almost completely caught up in Herbology, Astronomy, and Potions, correct?" Dumbledore said.

"Yes sir," Hermione said.

"Excellent. I truly believe you are capable of catching up, Ms. Granger. You remind me very much of another Gryffindor girl who didn't let anything stand in her way," Dumbledore said with a smile.

"Who, sir?" Hermione asked curiously.

"Mr. Potter's mother, she was just as dedicated as yourself and I see a lot of her in you," Dumbledore said as he smiled at Hermione.

It was certainly a good thing that Dumbledore was looking at Hermione because had he been looking at Harry, he would have been shocked to see the look of absolute hatred Harry was sending at Dumbledore. Neville and Fawkes both saw the glare though and Fawkes tried to calm the boy by singing; however, that seemed to only cause Harry's last nerve to snap.

"Shut up, you stupid bird," Harry snapped causing everyone in room, including Fawkes, to look at him in horror.

"Harry..." Dumbledore started uncertainly only to pause and then say, "Enter."

Harry, Hermione, and Neville all turned around to see the door open and Mrs. Tonks and Mr and Mrs. Weasley open the door.

"Oh, sorry headmaster, we didn't know you were in a meeting," Mrs. Weasley said.

"Is it time to wake Tonks and Ginny up?" Harry asked quickly, interrupting whatever Dumbledore was about to say.

"Yes, Harry, now that Mrs. Tonks and the Weasleys are here, we can proceed to the hospital wing," Dumbledore said.

"Andi!" Harry said sharply.

"Really, Harry I would prefer..." Andromeda started only to stop talking when a small elf popped into existence next to Harry.

"How can I help Master Harry?" Andi asked.

"Andi, go and tell Draco that it's time to wake Tonks and Ginny up. Oh, and be careful, the defense teacher is incredibly paranoid," Harry said as his elf nodded vigorously before disappearing with a quiet pop.

"When did you get a house elf?" Andromeda asked curiously.

"Over the summer," Harry replied evasively.

"Well, now that Mr. Potter has done us the favor of alerting Mr. Malfoy, we can head down to the hospital wing, I suppose," Dumbledore said.

"What does the Malfoy boy have to do with this? We were told that Ron and the twins wouldn't be allowed to be taken out of class," Arthur Weasley asked.

"Mr. Malfoy asked the board to allow Draco and I to be present when Tonks and Ginny are woken up," Harry said smugly.

"I see," Mr. Weasley said clearly annoyed.

"Can...can I come?" Hermione asked hesitantly, causing every head in the room to turn to her.

"Are you sure, Ms. Granger?" Dumbledore asked.

"I'd like to be there, sir," Hermione said as her eyes moistened.

"Very well, Ms. Granger. Mr. Longbottom, you are dismissed and you need not bother returning to class today. I'm sure Alastor will not mind you skiving the last twenty minutes of his class," Dumbledore said with a smile.

Neville nodded his head enthusiastically. "Thank you, sir," he said before getting up and leaving the office.

"When are we leaving?" Harry asked.

"Patience, Harry," Dumbledore said as he took out a piece of parchment, scribbled a note and handed it to Fawkes, who took it and then disappeared.

"I suppose we should head to the hospital wing. Severus should be arriving shortly," Dumbledore said as he stood up and left his office with Harry, Hermione, Mrs. Tonks, and Mr. and Mrs. Weasley following him.

"Are the Clearwaters not going to be joining us?" Harry asked as the group made its way down to the hospital wing.

"Unfortunately, they are out of the country at the time. They will be arriving this weekend to speak with Ms. Penelope," Dumbledore said patiently.

"And naturally the Creeveys being muggles won't be allowed here," Harry said simply.

A worried look crossed Dumbledore's face as the Weasleys and Andromeda both had to bite back scathing remarks to Harry. Hermione, though, did not hold her tongue, "And why should being a muggle matter if their son was hurt?!" she snapped.

Harry couldn't help but smirk, "Would the muggles even comprehend what had happened? Or the treatment that is being provided? It would be a waste of time to specially key them past the muggle repelling wards to allow them entrance to Hogwarts, explain everything, and then having them leave immediately."

"They allowed my parents here, Potter," Hermione said challengingly.

"That was completely different," Harry said, "They thought you had died. Of course they had to be alerted and brought to the school."

Hermione looked apocalyptic at Harry's pronouncement and said, "So muggles should only be informed if their children have died!"

Realizing that a continued argument with Hermione would ultimately awaken his temperamental animagus, Harry simply nodded his head and refused to argue back for the remainder of the walk.

"Poppy, Severus are you both here?" Dumbledore asked after opening the hospital wing doors.

"Yes, we just finished preparing the potion," Snape said as he strode out of Madam Pomfrey's office with a vial in each hand.

"Whenever you are ready, Severus," Dumbledore said.

Snape nodded his head, walked over to Tonks' bed, positioned a vial at the tip of her tongue, and allowed the potion to enter her mouth. As soon as the potion touched Tonks' tongue, her head began to shake slightly. Soon her entire body was shaking and Mrs. Tonks was becoming worried.

"What's wrong? What's happening?" Andromeda asked.

"The potion that we created works by overloading the nervous system," Snape lectured unemotionally. "As a Basilisk's gaze freezes all the nerves in the body, the potion will bring your daughter's body back to homeostasis. One of the side effects, though, are involuntary

tremors such as these while the potion makes its way through her body. It should pass."

Sure enough, a few seconds later Tonks stopped shaking and opened her eyes.

"Wha? Mum, is that you?" Tonks asked curiously.

"Oh dear, I'm so happy you're alright!" Andromeda said as she pulled Tonks into a hug while Snape went over to wake the other patients.

"Ugh...Mum...need...air...please...let...go," Tonks gasped out.

"I'm so sorry, are you alright?" Andromeda said as she began checking Tonks over looking for injuries.

"Why wouldn't I be...oh Merlin!" Tonks said as her eyes widened in terror. "Mum there is a gigantic snake in the school!"

"Nymphadora, please calm down. The Basilisk has been dealt with," Dumbledore said softly.

"Oh, thank Merlin," Tonks said, relieved. "That thing was huge, headmaster, how did you stop it?" Tonks asked.

"Ah yes, well, Ms. Tonks, Mr. Potter became rather obsessive about finding the Chamber of Secrets after you were attacked. He eventually discovered where the Chamber was and who was opening it. Since it's a rather exciting story, I'll let Mr. Potter tell it to you. Andromeda, perhaps we should give them some time to discuss things," Dumbledore said.

Andromeda looked ready to protest, but eventually acquiesced after giving her daughter a very tight hug and saying she would be speaking with Madam Pomfrey to see about her recovery.

Once Andromeda was gone, Harry stepped towards Tonks' bed unsure if his friend would be upset with him for inadvertently leading to her petrification. "Tonks, I, well, I'm sorry about wh..." Harry said.

Harry wasn't able to continue talking, though, because Tonks had grabbed him and brought him into a bone crushing hug.

"Thank you, Harry," Tonks said seriously before her eyes moistened, "and it's me who should be saying I'm sorry. I said some terrible things to you when I left. I never should have..."

"Tonks, we both said some mean things. We were both mad and...well let's just forget about it, alright?" Harry said.

Tonks nodded her head with a small smile on her face before asking, "Where was it, Harry, and who was opening it?"

"Err, well, the entrance was in Moaning Myrtles bathroom," Harry said, smiling brightly at Tonks' disbelieving look.

"Seriously, Harry, where is the entrance?" Tonks asked impatiently.

"I am serious, Tonks," Harry said with a grin. "Quite the cunning place to hide it, if you think about it."

"Wha? But? How did you ever find it? I never would have thought to look in Myrtle's bathroom," Tonks asked in astonishment.

Harry immediately launched into the story about how he began looking for the Chamber after she was attacked. How he had Andi and Salazar searching the school at every opportunity. Tonks was a very good audience. She cursed Snape when he told her how close he had come to being suspended and she nodded her head attentively when he told her about how Salazar discovered a student who was spreading the Basilisks smell around the school. Finally he told her about how Hermione had been taken into the chamber, and how he stunned Snape when he realized Salazar might be following the trail of the person.

"So who was it, Harry, who was opening the Chamber?" Tonks demanded impatiently, not noticing Hermione tensing up next to her.

"You mean all the attacks were because a stupid mudblood was dumb enough to let herself get possessed by one of her bloody

books?" an angry voice said, causing everyone in the room to turn and stare at Draco Malfoy and the recently awoken Ginny Weasley.

When Draco saw that Tonks was okay, he made his way over to his godfather, who had just administered the antidote to Ginny. He watched quietly behind his godfather and the two elder Weasleys as Ginny started to stir before opening her eyes.

Ginny seemed to look around the hospital wing in confusion for a moment before Mrs. Weasley pulled her into a huge hug. "Oh Ginny, dear, we were so worried about you! Are you alright? Are you tired? Do you need anything?" Mrs. Weasley asked frantically.

"Mum? What are you...? Why am I in the hospital wing? What happened? The last thing I remember...sweet Merlin, there is a massive snake in the school!" Ginny said in horror.

"Technically, there was a giant snake in the school," Draco drawled, causing Ginny to turn towards him with a broad smile, "The Basilisk was killed after Harry dragged me all around this accursed castle obsessively hunting for the entrance to the Chamber of Secrets."

"Draco! What are you doing here?" she asked happily.

"Father strongly suggested to the board that Harry and I should be allowed here when everyone was awoken," Draco said with a smug grin.

"Harry's here? Where?" Ginny asked missing the slightly annoyed look that flashed across Draco's face.

"He's over there with Tonks," Draco said nonchalantly.

"Oh, okay. So what happened, Draco? One minute I'm staring at a snake and the next thing I know I'm waking up here?" Ginny asked.

"Dear, it's really not important. The good news is you're okay," Mrs. Weasley said as she pushed past Draco, who looked like he would like nothing more than to hex her.

"Mum, I want to know what happened," Ginny said immediately.

"Ginny, it doesn't matter, we'll be taking you home soon and..." Mr. Weasley said.

"WHAT! Taking me home? Why? Wait...how long have I been unconscious?" Ginny asked, suddenly horrified.

"Just over a month, Ginny. School ends in two weeks," Draco supplied helpfully.

"I don't understand, Dad, why would I be going home soon? I have to take my finals," Ginny said.

"Professor Dumbledore said that you will be allowed to take them over the summer once you've had some time to catch up," Mrs. Weasley said.

"No, I-I can catch up. I still have two weeks. I can catch up in that time; please, I don't want to leave now," Ginny pleaded.

"We don't want your grades suffering because you want to stay with your...friends," Mr. Weasley said giving a passing look at Draco.

"Actually, sir, if Ginny wants to stay at Hogwarts I'm sure we could catch her up in no time. Harry already has plans to tutor Granger and he had talked about helping Ginny as well. He is top of the year in Transfiguration and Charms. Blaise Zabini could teach Ginny Astronomy and Herbology in his sleep, and I could easily catch her up in Potions," Draco said dismissively.

"While that is thoughtful of you, Mr. Malfoy, I wouldn't want your grades suffering," Mr. Weasley said strongly.

Draco could see that he was beginning to anger the balding Weasley and couldn't help but smirk to himself as he said, "It wouldn't be a problem at all, sir. Harry, Blaise, and I are all among the best in our year. It would be quite easy to catch Ginny up. And besides, sir, Ginny is a Slytherin, and Slytherins always look out for one another,"

Draco said, knowing the last part was a direct shot to the older Weasleys hatred of everything Slytherin.

"See Dad, it won't be a problem," Ginny said, smiling fondly at Draco.

"Your mother and I will need to think about this, Ginevra," Mr. Weasley said, not sounding at all happy.

"What's there to think about? I don't want to study over the summer, and I know Harry, Draco, and Blaise will do a great job helping me. Now, Draco, tell me what's happened since I was unconscious?" Ginny asked.

Draco smirked and puffed out his chest importantly as he had often seen his father do. "First of all, Ginny, you were not unconscious, you were petrified by a Basilisk, and then given a dreamless sleep potion," Draco clarified.

"Whatever, I guess the professors were able to catch the person behind the attacks, then?" Ginny asked.

"The professors?" Draco scoffed, "Harry found the chamber after dragging me around the castle for three weeks looking for it. Lucky he did find it. Harry was going to be suspended for skipping class and detentions during the time he was looking for the chamber," Draco said.

"No," Ginny said horrified, "Suspend him? Dumbledore would never..." Ginny said in astonishment.

"Of course he wouldn't," Draco said condescendingly, "Dumbledore was tossed out shortly after you and Tonks were petrified."

Ginny could only shake her head as she tried to process the incredible turn of events which she had practically slept through. Eventually though she narrowed her eyes angrily and said, "So who was it?"

"Unfortunately, that is a secret. Very need to know - and certain people," Draco said, casting a not so subtle look at the scowling Mr. and Mrs. Weasley, "don't need to know."

"Mum, Dad, can you leave us alone for a moment?" Ginny asked hopefully.

"Ginevra, I certainly don't think that is at all necessar..." Mrs. Weasley started angrily.

"Mum, just go stand a few beds over so you can't hear. Please?" Ginny asked hopefully.

Mrs. Weasley looked at Draco for a moment before she stood up with Arthur. The two elder Weasleys glanced at Draco one last time before walking a few beds over not looking at all happy.

"Now who did it?" Ginny demanded immediately.

"Well, it turns out that Granger had this diary that she was writing in all year. Said diary was a really powerful dark artifact created by the Dark Lord. According the Harry, the Dark Lord was somehow able to possess her and used her to open the Chamber of Secrets," Draco whispered quietly.

Ginny's eyes narrowed dangerously by the time Draco finished talking. "You mean all the attacks were because a stupid mudblood was dumb enough to let herself get possessed by one of her bloody books?" Ginny hissed out angrily, her voice easily echoing across the nearly empty hospital wing, causing everyone present to look at her with wide eyes.

"GINEVRA MOLLY WEASLEY! How dare you use such language!" Molly thundered as she strode towards her daughter's bed, Mr. Weasley a step behind her with an equally angry look on his face.

"Ginevra, how dare you use such language! You know our family's opinion on such bigotry!" Arthur said seriously.

"I-I...I'm sorry, I was just so angry that she," Ginny pointed a finger at a teary eyed Hermione, "would be stupid enough to let a book possess her," Ginny said.

"That is absolutely no excuse for such...such...horrendous language! The way it just rolled off your tongue is even more disturbing! Tell me, have you used that word before, Ginevra?" Arthur demanded.

"No," Ginny said unconvincingly.

"And now you are lying to us!" Arthur accused angrily as he quickly turned away and strode out of the hospital wing.

Molly hesitated to follow Arthur out of the hospital wing when she saw Ginny had tears falling down her face. "I'll go talk to him, but you will be punished," she said as she left the hospital wing.

Ginny just watched her mother leave the hospital wing. When she was gone, she glared at Hermione, who was now crying. Stupid mudblood deserves to cry! Honestly, how can you not notice you're being possessed?

"You mean all the attacks were because a stupid mudblood was dumb enough to let herself get possessed by one of her bloody books!"

"What? Harry, what's she talking about?" Tonks asked quickly as Mrs and Mr. Weasley started to berate Ginny.

"It's my fault, Tonks. I-it was m-m-my diary. It w-was cursed. It was c-created by You-Know-Who and h-he was able to con-control me t-the m-more I wrote in it. I'm so sorry," Hermione sobbed.

Tonks' eyes widened in surprise and she instinctively looked at Harry.

"It's true, Tonks. Voldemort was possessing her for a large part of the year," Harry said as compassionately as he could.

"I-is that why you were so distant this year?" Tonks asked hesitantly.

Hermione could only nod. "I-I'm so...so sorry. I-I have blank s-spots where I can't r-remember d...days at a t-time. I'm so sorry for what happened to everyone. I'm sorry I ruined our friendship," Hermione said between tears.

"No, it's not your fault, Hermione, and you didn't ruin our friendship. You didn't know what was happening, I don't blame you, and...and I'm sure Ginny is just upset. She'll get over it," Tonks said soothingly.

"H-how can you not blame me?" Hermione asked weakly as Tonks pulled her into a tight hug.

"Regardless of what other people might have told you," Tonks shot Harry a suspicious look, this is not your fault."

"Hey, don't blame me," Harry said indignantly, "I saved her life and haven't once said what happened was her fault."

"Is that true, Hermione?" Tonks demanded.

Hermione could only nod her head. "Only a few people know what really happened. Please don't tell anyone. I don't want everyone thinking I'm d-dangerous or something. I-I really don't even know how I got the diary. It just...it just showed up in my handbag when I came back from Diagon Alley. Dumbledore says he'll help me try to figure out when I was given it, but..." Hermione said, trailing off sadly.

"Calm down, Hermione, calm down, it is okay. I'm sure Dumbledore will get to the bottom of this," Tonks said soothingly.

"I'm sorry, Tonks. At the very least, I ruined your summer. I'm sure you won't be able to take your exams after missing over a month of class," Hermione said sadly.

"Don't worry about that, my mum works at the ministry. The department of education is just a few floors away from where she works. What about you, though? How are you going to take your exams?" Tonks asked.

"Oh...um...well, Harry and Neville are going to help me catch up in Charms, Transfiguration, and Herbology. I-I'm almost caught up in Potions and Astronomy, and our defense marks have been thrown out..." Hermione said.

"What? Why are our defense marks being thrown out?" Tonks asked.

"Well, Lockhart sort of disappeared. No one knows where he is and the new defense teacher thinks his lessons were a joke, so he apparently wants to have the defense marks thrown out this year," Hermione said.

"I think I'm going to like this new defense teacher," Tonks said causing Harry to snort.

"Trust me," Harry said scathingly, "You're not."

Monday May 17th, Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry

The week following Ginny and Tonks waking up was incredibly taxing. As soon as Ginny and Tonks were able to leave the hospital wing, Harry began helping them to catch up in both Charms and Transfiguration. As if attending class, tutoring Ginny, Tonks, and Hermione, and answering the sheer number of questions from inquisitive students about the chamber of secrets wasn't enough, Ginny seemed to have developed an incredible amount of animosity towards Hermione. It had taken a meeting with professor Dumbledore and her parents to get Ginny to agree to not, under any circumstances, reveal what she knew about Hermione's involvement in the Chamber of Secrets.

Unfortunately, being forced to hold her tongue about Hermione only seemed to infuriate the youngest Weasley. Whenever the two girls were within earshot of one another, Ginny could be counted on to spout off some insult. Hermione had taken it well, seemingly ignoring the girl; Harry, however, was having to make himself scarce rather often when the two girls were together lest he lose control of his animagus and begin to hurl curses at Ginny.

"Harry, before we begin, I'd just like to thank you for taking this seriously. I and well...everyone, I guess, sort of expected you to act...well, like Ginny is," Neville admitted.

Harry observed Neville for a moment before saying, "You and Hermione have gotten closer, I take it."

Neville's face turned a little red before he said, "Tonks and I are practically her only friends in Gryffindor. She's not a bad person, Harry, and I'm glad you're finally giving her a chance," he said.

"Giving who a chance?" Ginny asked walking over and putting her books on the table.

"No one, Ginny, don't worry about it. So, how have your parents taken your horrendous use of the 'M' word? Have they given out your punishment yet?" Harry asked, somewhat hoping that a bad punishment would temper the moody redhead.

"Don't remind me. They decided that I'm going to be grounded for the first two months of summer. Two bloody months because of that..." Ginny said frustrated.

"Hi everyone," Hermione said, glaring slightly at Ginny.

"Sit down," Harry instructed Hermione.

"Nice to see you also, Potter," Hermione said indifferently.

"I'm sure," Harry said sarcastically.

"What are we going to be working on today?" Hermione asked.

"Did you read the passage I gave you on mammal transfiguration?" Harry asked.

"Yes, it was incredibly detailed. It was so interesting that I asked Madam Pince if she happened to have anything similar. Unfortunately, it turns out that the only other book that contains as detailed descriptions is in the..." Hermione said.

"Good you read it," Harry said cutting Hermione off and taking a cat out of his bag.

"You are going to turn this cat into a pillow," Harry instructed.

"B-but I thought we'd save that for later, I mean it is one of the most difficult..." Hermione said.

"There is no time for later. From what Neville tells me, you are slightly behind schedule in Herbology, and I know you are slightly behind in charms. You are very good at Transfiguration so I'm picking up the pace so that we can finish that early and spend more time on other subjects. So go ahead and try to change the cat into a pillow," Harry said.

"But we aren't supposed to do spells in the library, Madam Pince..." Hermione lectured.

"...Has been told by McGonagall to make an exception for you, Ginny, and Tonks. Now, no more stalling," Harry said with some bite.

Hermione looked like she wanted to argue, but decided against it. She took out her wand, and tried the spell. The spell struck the tabby cat in the side; however, it didn't turn into a pillow. While the cat's fur turned white and it choked up a few feathers, it remained a cat.

"Focus, you need to focus," Harry said.

"I know that, I'm not you, though, Potter. You just can't say 'focus' and expect me to get it on the next attempt," Hermione said in annoyance.

"You need a clear mental picture of the pillow you want the cat to turn into. Do it again," Harry said.

"Fine," Hermione said as she re-tried the spell. Once again the cat remained, but there was noticeable improvement. The cat's tail had completely disappeared and its body was practically completely white with some blue stripes running down its back.

It took nearly thirty minutes for Hermione to get the transfiguration correct, but she was incredibly pleased with herself when she finally finished. Harry congratulated her and had her spend the next thirty minutes making sure she was capable of doing it consistently and was familiar with the counter spell.

"Alright, that's a good job. Go work with Neville on Herbology for the next hour or so, and send Ginny over here," Harry said, unconsciously smiling at her.

Hermione hesitated for a moment before saying, "Alright...um-thanks, Potter."

"No need to thank me, just send Ginny over here," Harry said simply.

Hermione nodded her head and walked a few tables over where Ginny and Neville were working on Herbology.

"So I guess it's my turn now, is it?" Ginny asked, sitting down across from him.

"Yep," Harry said pleasantly.

"Can I ask you a question before we start?" Ginny asked.

"You just did," Harry replied cheekily.

"Prat. No seriously, though, Harry, why are you helping her?" Ginny asked curiously.

"I have my reasons, Ginny," Harry said ominously.

"That's the same thing that Draco said. My Occulmency is good, Harry, I can keep a secret," Ginny said.

"I know that, Ginny, but this secret is something between Mr. Malfoy and myself," Harry said.

"Fine, I just can't stand being near her. Dad always said to never trust something unless you can see where it keeps its brain. Stupid

mudblood should have realized she was being used,” Ginny grumbled.

Harry simply gritted his teeth. He would make sure Ginny had a very difficult time this lesson for that remark.

Friday, May 28th, Great Hall, Hogwarts

As Harry walked into the Great Hall for the last time as a second year, he couldn't help but feel a myriad of feelings wash over him. He felt proud for managing to help catch Tonks up on her third year Transfiguration and Charms. While this did help Tonks out immensely and give her a reason to stay at Hogwarts for the last couple of weeks, she was still going to have to take her exams in Potions, Herbology, Astronomy, Ancient Runes, Arithmacy, and History at the ministry over the summer.

Harry was also exhausted from the sheer amount of work he put into tutoring Hermione. Still, his animagus radiating its approval after each successful lesson was a welcome relief from the headache it usually gave him. Harry couldn't help but be slightly surprised that Granger made it through the exam week without suffering from a nervous breakdown, though. She was spending every spare second either in the library or running between teachers' offices asking for help. Harry was just glad that Transfiguration and Charms were the first two finals. Once they were done, Hermione didn't bother him for the rest of the week. Since Herbology was the last final, Neville was hounded by her for the entire testing week to go over notes.

As for his own exams, they went as expected. While he was exhausted from the late night tutoring and study sessions with Tonks, Hermione, and Ginny, Harry was almost positive that he would be receiving O's in every subject but History of Magic. Draco and Blaise didn't share Harry's confidence in near perfect scores, but they were sure they did well enough.

Ginny was probably the exact opposite of Hermione during the testing week. While Hermione was running herself ragged and driving every teacher in the school insane, Ginny was going about the testing week calm and collected. When Harry eventually asked why she wasn't

worried, she simply replied that between Draco helping with Potions, Blaise helping with Astronomy, Neville helping with Herbology, and his help with Charms and Transfiguration, she wasn't expecting any problems on any exam except History of Magic.

In fact the only thing that seemed to rattle Ginny at all was whenever Hermione was in her line of sight. The girl still hadn't forgiven Hermione for her role in the opening of the chamber of secrets. It was even beginning to bug Draco who normally would use any excuse to bash Hermione.

Harry, Draco, Blaise, and Ginny sat down at the Slytherin table for the end of year feast. The entire hall was decked out in Ravenclaw Blue with the picture of a massive Eagle behind the staff table.

"Another year has passed us by at Hogwarts, and what a year it was. I'd like to think that your heads are just a little bit fuller than when you arrived, and I do hope that you don't empty them too much over summer vacation. Now as to the matter of the house cup. In fourth place, Hufflepuff house with 410 points, in third place, Gryffindor house with 425 points, in second place, Slytherin house with 500 points, and finishing in first place, Ravenclaw house with 510 points," Dumbledore said as the Ravenclaw table exploded into cheers.

"I still can't believe that Ravenclaw won the bloody house cup," Draco complained.

"I know it's the first time we've lost in eight years," Blaise commented.

"Yeah, but Flitwick looks happy, doesn't he," Harry said, pointing up at the staff table.

Draco, Ginny, and Blaise all turned their heads in time to see the tiny head of Ravenclaw house practically jumping for joy as Dumbledore presented him with the house cup.

"Better Ravenclaw than the Gryffindors," Ginny said.

"That's true," Draco agreed.

The food was excellent as always and too soon the feast was over and everyone made their way out of the castle and onto the Hogwarts Express. Harry, Tonks, Ginny, Blaise, and Draco found an empty compartment near the back of the train.

"So what is everyone planning on doing this summer?" Blaise asked.

"Well, I was going to be grounded for the first two months, but my dad won some ministry galleon drawing, and he decided to take the entire family to Egypt for the last two weeks of June to visit my brother Bill," Ginny said.

"So you're not grounded, that's good news," Harry said.

"No, I'm still grounded, just not for the month of June," Ginny grumbled.

"So you're still grounded for all of July and August just because you called Granger a mudblood? Tell your parents to take a calming potions or something," Draco said in disgust.

"Yeah, no kidding," Ginny said.

"I thought you'd said that they were reconsidering?" Blaise asked.

"That's what they'd said until my brothers," Ginny spat the word, "decided to tell my dad how I called a Hufflepuff first year a mudblood earlier this year. My dad probably would have grounded me all summer if we weren't going on vacation."

"What about you, Tonks?" Blaise asked in an obvious attempt at moving the topic away from the volatile subject of Hermione Granger.

"Well, my mum apparently decided that since I was petrified for over a month, she didn't need to punish me for what happened over Christmas. Unfortunately, she is making me come with her to work every day to make sure I study for my exams," Tonks grumbled.

"When do you take your exams?" Draco asked.

"July 9th," Tonks said. "So I'll have some time to study and get ready for them."

"So Harry, what are you planning on doing? I know you said Dumbledore is making you stay with the Dursleys for a little while, but if you won't be able to hang out with Tonks, do you want to spend June at the Manor?" Draco asked.

Harry sighed. "Tonks actually told me that she wouldn't be around much already, Draco, and I've decided to stay with the Dursleys for a while," he admitted.

"What? Why would you ever want to do that?" Draco asked in shock.

"Well...I-um need to work on my Occulmency," Harry said simply.

"Can't you do that at Draco's?" Blaise asked curiously.

Harry bit his lip before saying, "Do you all remember how I was really short and angry with everyone earlier this semester?" he asked.

"Yeah, it was hard to ignore you being a serious prat to everyone," Ginny said.

"Well...you see, the second stage of Occulmency involves reliving and sorting through a lot of memories. I-I have a lot of memories I really wish I didn't have to relive," Harry explained.

"So that's why you were mad at anything that breathed?" Blaise asked.

"Yeah," Harry said.

"And you two knew about it," Blaise said to Tonks and Draco.

"Yeah, we knew, that's why we didn't get mad when he was being rather prat-ish," Tonks said with a teasing smirk.

"Why didn't you just tell us, Harry?" Ginny asked sounding a little hurt.

"It was private," Harry said, not at all caring if the girl was upset.

"Maybe, but I think you didn't want us to ask what these memories you don't like reliving are about," Blaise said knowingly.

"It's not important. The point is I'm staying with the muggles so that I can be as angry as I want. I won't feel bad if I take out my anger on them," Harry said darkly as Tonks, Blaise, and Ginny shared a concerned look at that statement.

"So how long are you going to stay with them?" Draco asked seemingly oblivious to his friend's anger.

"I don't know. It depends how..." Harry stopped talking when there was a knock on the compartment door. Tonks cast the unlocking charm and Draco slid the door open, revealing Hermione Granger and a nervous looking Neville Longbottom.

"What do you want?" Ginny asked icily staring at Granger.

Hermione simply ignored Ginny and said, "Can I talk to you in private, Potter?"

"Why?" Harry asked truly curious.

"Please, it'll take less than five minutes," Granger said.

"Harry just go, the smell of mudblood is starting to give me a headache," Draco said causing Hermione and Neville to glare at him.

Feeling the Gargoyle starting to stir, Harry quickly got up, followed Hermione and Neville out of the compartment, and closed the door behind him. The two Gryffindors led him to an empty compartment near the middle of the train. Once the door was closed, Hermione said, "I-well, I-I just wanted to thank you for helping me."

"What?" Harry asked in astonishment.

"You didn't have to help me, but you did. McGonagall told me that you got it to count for your tutoring for next year, but...but still...thank

you. I'm sure I wouldn't have done as well on my Charms and Transfiguration exams if you didn't help," Hermione said her face red with embarrassment.

Harry couldn't help but be amazed by two things. First, he was surprised that Hermione Granger had actually thanked him, and second that he could honestly say he didn't resent her like he had earlier this year. The Gargoyle seemed to preen in the back of his mind, and Harry found himself momentarily wondering just how much his Animagus would influence him. Before his thoughts followed that train of thought though, he realized that he was simply staring at Hermione Granger who was looking nervously at him. "I suppose. I owe you an apology," Harry admitted, a part of him still hating the words that were coming out of his mouth.

"What?" Hermione asked clearly confused.

"I...apologize for treating you the way I have. Mind you, I still don't really like you," Harry said as he tried to get his feelings towards the girl straight, "but I realize I shouldn't have treated you like I have been."

Both Hermione and Neville seemed completely shocked by his statement and simply stared open mouthed at him for a minute before Hermione said, "So...so what does that mean?"

Harry honestly didn't know how to answer the girl. He was far too confused about his own feelings to properly explain them. "I don't know," he admitted. "I guess we'll have to see where next year takes us. I don't hate you, and I won't treat you like I have before, though."

"What about Malfoy and the youngest Weasley?" Neville asked. "Are you going to do anything about them? Or how about how you and your Slytherin buddies treat the other muggleborns like Collin Creevy?"

Harry felt a great deal of indignation rise up within both him and the Gargoyle. Here he was attempting to make some amends and Longbottom had the audacity to throw the mudblood Creevy in his face! "I can't control what others do, Longbottom," Harry spat, "And

as for Creevy and the rest of the Gryffindor mudbloods, my feelings about them haven't changed one bit."

"That, that doesn't make any sense at all!" Hermione said, "Why can you admit that you were wrong about me, but still treat them like you do?" she demanded.

Instead of responding, Harry simply said, "I'm not in the mood to explain myself to you two. Are we done here?"

"Yes," Hermione said enraged at Potter's hypocrisy.

Harry just nodded his head and quickly went back to his compartment.

"What did Hermione want?" Tonks asked as soon as he opened the door.

"To thank me for helping her," Harry said as he did his best to push the conversation with Hermione out of his mind.

"I still don't know why you bothered," Ginny spat.

"I have my reasons for helping her, Ginny," Harry said darkly.

"Whatever. I still can't believe Dumbledore is letting her come back after she let herself get possessed by You-Know-Who. I mean, what if he is somehow able to possess her again?" Ginny said darkly. "Can he really be sure that she's not still under his influence?"

"The diary is destroyed, Ginny," Tonks said hotly. "Hermione deserves to put this behind her. It's not her fault she was tricked by You-Know-Who."

"But it was so stupid of her," Ginny said.

"It could have happened to anyone," Tonks barked out angrily.

"No, it couldn't, Tonks, only a reading-obsessed mudblood would let themselves get possessed by a book," Draco said confidently.

"What does being muggleborn have to do with anything?" Tonks shot back.

"Let's see, Tonks. Would you just start writing in a diary that you just found one day without making sure it was safe?" Draco asked.

"I don't know if I would or not. If it was just a blank, plain looking, muggle diary, I don't see why not," Tonks said.

"Okay, well, would your mum not check it for spells if she saw you were obsessively writing in it and acting strange?" Draco asked.

"Maybe," Tonks admitted.

"See. If she was a half-blood or a pureblood this whole ordeal never would have happened. It's just one of the dangers mudbloods present to our world," Draco said.

"Whatever Draco, we have no idea what dark magic You-Know-Who put on that diary. I don't think any of us can say that we could have just overpowered or fought the enchantments he cast," Tonks said.

"What do you think Harry?" Ginny asked after seeing Draco reluctantly accept Tonks' point about the Dark Lord's power.

"I think both Draco and Tonks make good points," Harry said hoping to avoid the entire argument for the moment.

"What about you Blaise?" Tonks demanded.

"The Zab..." Blaise said.

"Are neutral, I don't care about your bloody family, Blaise, what do you think?" Tonks demanded.

"Fine, I think Draco has a point, Tonks, happy? I don't think that anybody with at least one magical parent would let themselves be tricked into being possessed, especially if they started to have blank spots in their memory like Harry said Granger was having. I mean when you start losing chunks of time that correspond to the attacks,

you would think that the person would at least consider that they are connected. Granger didn't and people got hurt. That's what I think, Tonks," Blaise said strongly.

Tonks was quiet for a long time after Blaise finished. Finally Harry decided to break the silence and said, "So Blaise, what are you up to this summer?"

"Well, Susan is going to be spending some time at my house while my father and Madam Bones work on some Wizengamot proposal," Blaise said.

Harry, Draco, Ginny, Blaise, and Tonks avoided talking about anything that might upset someone for a while and just as the conversation about Hermione was being forgotten by everyone, the compartment door opened revealing Fred, George, and Ron Weasley.

"Ginny, get up, dad said not to let you sit with anyone who's a bad influence on you," Ron Weasley said sternly.

"Oh, and what's he going to do if I tell you to bugger off, Ron? I'm already grounded for two months because you went and told on me," Ginny spat at her brother.

"Ginny, you're coming with us," Fred said.

"Yeah, we won't let this lot turn you into a bigot," George said.

"Piss off, Weasleys," Tonks said threateningly.

Fred glared at Tonks before saying, "You know, Potter was really upset when his metamorph was in the hospital wing. What exactly do you do for him that caused him to miss you so much?"

Tonks whipped out her wand in a flash and yelled, "Bombarda!"

"Protego," Fred said quickly; however, while the shield held, the curse still pushed him back several feet.

"Stupefy!" George shouted, catching Tonks unaware and hitting her in the side of the head.

"Avis!" Harry barked causing dozens of birds shoot of out his wand. The flock of angry crows instantly began pecking, scratching, and clawing the three Weasleys, who quickly fled the compartment.

Draco slammed the compartment door closed and cast a locking charm on it.

"Enervate," Harry said, pointing his wand at Tonks, waking her up.

"I can't believe I got stunned! I hate them," Tonks growled.

"You can say that again," Ginny grumbled angrily.

"I swear to Merlin, Ginny, the next time your brothers call me a slut, I'm going to castrate them!" Tonks raged.

"Calm down, Tonks, they're gone," Blaise said.

"I don't care. Did you know that those two told all my dorm mates that the reason Harry was upset about me being attacked is because he couldn't get any with me petrified?" Tonks said angrily.

"What!" Harry said in horror.

"Oh yeah, Harry, apparently we've been together since Christmas of last year!" Tonks spat.

"Surely people don't believe that?" Blaise said instantly.

"Ha, you clearly don't know any Gryffindor girls. To them, I'm some scarlet woman who uses my powers to seduce Harry Potter," Tonks spat.

"Why didn't we hear about this? If it's a big rumor, surely someone in Slytherin would have told us?" Draco said.

"The twins told all the girls that if it got back to you, you'd probably curse them. After you and Blaise were polyjuiced, Draco, no one doubted you would probably hex the person who you overheard so the rumor stayed in Gryffindor tower. I only found out a few days ago when I overheard Katie Bell talking to Alicia Spinet," Tonks said viciously.

"I think 'that cassstrating' them 'iss too' good for 'thossse' two, 'Tonksss.' Harry said so upset that his voice shifted back and forth between English and Parseltongue.

'Who are you cassstrating?' Salazar asked curiously.

'The Weassssley twinsss.' Harry hissed menacingly to Salazar.

"Harry, can you please speak in English? That half-parseltongue half-English is just a little creepy," Draco said, speaking what everyone was thinking.

"The twins need to pay," Harry said menacingly.

"Agreed, maybe I can get Bill to teach me some curses," Ginny said.

"If you're serious about wanting to castrate them, I'm sure our library has a book with that spell. I could look for it and send it to you," Draco said honestly.

"I might take you up on that, Draco," Tonks said angrily.

The conversation about the most painful ways to hurt the Weasley twins lasted until the group noticed the large group of red heads that were making their way towards them once they stepped off the train at platform nine and three-quarters. Harry saw as Mrs. Weasley's eyes narrowed when she saw Ginny standing between Draco and him.

"There's your mum, Ginny, and she doesn't look pleased to see us," Harry commented.

Ginny turned her head to see where Harry was pointing, and sure enough her mum seemed to be pushing her way through the crowd as fast as she could to get to her. "I guess this is goodbye, then. I'll see you all next year," Ginny said as she hugged Harry, Draco, Blaise, and Tonks.

"Don't worry, Gin. We'll write you all the time, and you'll be in Egypt before you realize it," Tonks said.

"I hope so," Ginny said.

"Ginevra, let's go, your father is waiting," Mrs. Weasley said sharply.

Harry could practically see Ginny restraining herself from saying something back as she bit her lower lip.

"Alright mum," Ginny grumbled as she followed her mum.

"We are going to have to remember to write Ginny a lot," Tonks said.

"No kidding, she's been with her family less than twenty seconds and she already looks ready to murder the twins," Draco said as they watched Ginny interact with her brothers.

"Well, I see my father. I'll owl you guys," Blaise said.

"Bye Blaise," Tonks said.

"Yeah, have a good summer," Harry said.

"You too, Harry. Good luck with those Muggles," Blaise said.

"I'm sure father will make sure he doesn't get into too much trouble for cursing them, Blaise," Draco said.

"Good. I'll see you all later," Blaise said as he grabbed his trunk and walked into the crowd.

"Do you see your mum?" Harry asked Tonks.

"No, but if I know her, she is probably talking to somebody she knows from the ministry," Tonks said.

"Have you seen your father and mother, Draco?" Harry asked.

"I think they are probably waiting by the barrier like last year," Draco said with a smile.

"Is your father planning on scaring Harry's relatives again?" Tonks asked as she continued to search for her mum amongst the crowd of people.

"Father never misses an opportunity to frighten muggles," Draco said simply.

"I...oh, there is my mum," Tonks said, pointing to where her mum was standing with an elderly looking witch.

"Who's the witch she's talking to?" Harry asked.

"That's Griselda Marchbanks, she's an elder of the Wizengamot and heads the Department of Education at the ministry and the WIZARDING Examination Authority," Draco said with distaste.

"How do you know that?" Harry asked, slightly surprised that Draco knew the older woman.

"Father doesn't like her. She managed to stop one of his proposals in the Wizengamot a few years ago. I've never seen father so upset. When he was done destroying our kitchen, I looked at the paper to see what had him so upset, and I remember her face from the front page. She looks a little older, but that is definitely her," Draco said.

"I wonder what she is doing here? She is way too old to have a child on the express," Tonks said.

"Let's go find out," Harry said as he quickly strode over to where Mrs. Tonks was standing, Tonks and Draco right behind him.

"Hello Mrs. Tonks, Ms. Marchbanks, how are you today?" Harry asked pleasantly, causing the two women to abruptly end their conversation and look at him.

"Hello Harry," Andromeda said.

Harry could tell that Andromeda was less than thrilled to see Draco. She would completely avoid looking at him only to flick her eyes back to him every now and then with a look of disdain.

"How did you know who I was, Mr. Potter?" Ms. Marchbanks asked curtly.

"Draco recognized you," Harry said simply.

"You're Lucius' son, are you?" Ms. Marchbanks asked Draco with just a hint of distaste.

"Yes ma'am," Draco replied coldly.

"You should know, Mr. Potter, that the decisions that you make during your youth can affect the rest of your life. I would urge you to make sure that you make the correct decisions. Andi, it was a pleasure, now I really must go say hello to Augusta," Ms. Marchbanks said before she left to go speak to a large woman wearing a Vulture hat.

"Mum, why were you talking to Ms. Marchbanks?" Tonks asked.

"I was simply making sure that your arrangements have been taken care of to take your exams. Now let's go, Nymphadora," Mrs. Tonks said as she practically dragged Tonks away from Harry and Draco.

"She still doesn't like me at all," Draco commented.

"Yeah, maybe she'll get over it someday," Harry said.

"At this point, I couldn't care less," Draco said harshly.

"Come on, let's go find your dad," Harry said as he and Draco began weaving through the crowd looking for Mr and Mrs. Malfoy.

"There they are," Draco said striding forward towards the barrier that separated the muggle and magical platforms.

"Hello Father, Mother," Draco said politely after he hugged Narcissa.

"Oh you two are getting so tall! Lucius, why didn't you tell me?" Narcissa asked.

"I hardly thought it was important, dear," Lucius said simply.

"Not important? My Draco is becoming a man," Narcissa said proudly.

"You baby the boy too much, Narcissa," Lucius said earning himself a glare.

"I do not baby him, Lucius," Narcissa said.

"Harry, how many times did Draco receive sweets from Narcissa this year?" Lucius asked.

Harry, who was enjoying the banter, was caught slightly off guard by the question, but one look at Draco and Narcissa told him what his answer should be. "I don't know sir, once or twice a semester," Harry said evasively.

"Bah! Everyone is against me. Once or twice a week is more like it," Lucius said exasperatedly.

"See, Lucius, I do not baby Draco," Narcissa said smugly.

"Please, Draco probably just gives Harry half the sweets," Lucius grumbled.

"So what are your plans, Harry? Draco did mention that Dumbledore is once again making you return to those filthy muggles," Narcissa said distastefully.

"Yes, but I don't mind it. I need to work on my Occulmency and I...well, I discovered that I have a lot of bad memories to work through," Harry said.

Both Lucius and Narcissa shared a look before Narcissa said, "Dear, you shouldn't have to relive those memories around those...those disgusting creatures."

"I'll be okay, ma'am," Harry said evasively.

"I don't like you spending any time at all with those things, Harry. As soon as you're ready to leave, send Andi and we'll come and get you or send you a portkey," Lucius said.

"Thank you, sir," Harry said sincerely.

"Well, I suppose we should go take you to them," Lucius said, his voice dripping with malice.

Harry could only nod as he followed Lucius through the barrier back into the Muggle world.

June 30th, Headmaster's Office, Hogwarts

A visibly withdrawn Albus Dumbledore removed his head from his personal pensieve and let a single tear slide down his face. He had finally figured out just who was responsible for giving Hermione Granger the diary of Tom Riddle.

Harry Potter.

After watching Ms. Granger's memory of her trip to Diagon Alley, it was clear that Harry gave her Tom's diary. There could be no disputing that.

"I can't believe Harry knew what he was doing, Fawkes," Albus said after taking a seat behind his desk.

Fawkes hesitated for a moment before thrilling his agreement.

Albus let out a breath he didn't know he was holding. He couldn't believe Harry would knowingly try to harm Ms. Granger, or put the entire school in danger. However, there were still many questions that needed to be answered. How did Harry come into contact with Tom's diary? Why did he give it to Ms. Granger? Did he know who Tom Riddle was?

"Do you mean to tell us that the Potter boy was responsible for the opening of the Chamber of Secrets?" Dilys Derwent bellowed from her portrait frame.

Albus looked up and seeing the expectant looks on all the portraits faces, he reluctantly nodded his head.

"Madness! Dumbledore, the boy must be expelled!" Charles Prewett shouted.

"I can not believe what Mr. Potter did was intentional, Charles," Albus said.

"What about what he and his snake did to Lockhart! We all heard what Sir Cadogan told you! The boy is a killer, Dumbledore!" Dexter Fortescue yelled over the other arguing portraits.

"Sir Cadogan also informed us that Lockhart started the confrontation and threatened to obliviate Harry. We all agreed that Lockhart's death will best be left attributed to the Basilisk," Albus stated calmly.

"That was before we found out Potter was responsible for this whole ordeal, Albus!" Dilys Derwent interjected.

"Hear, hear!" Several portraits cried out.

"We must not forget that Harry was responsible for saving Ms. Granger as well as closing the chamber forever," Albus argued.

There was a great deal of grumbling amongst the portraits as they argued Dumbledore's point. Finally, it was the voice of Albus' predecessor that quieted the arguing portraits.

"Are you sure you are not making the same mistake that I did with Tom, Albus?" Armando Dippet asked softly.

Dumbledore looked visibly shaken by the comparison. "Harry is not like Tom, Armando."

"But you can not deny that you have a soft spot for him, just as I did for Tom, Albus. We are often blind to those we wish to believe the best of and unfortunately that lesson took me far too many years to learn," Armando said.

"Armando is right, Albus. The Potter boy is very much like Tom Riddle. When you met with him after he saved Ms. Granger from the Chamber, did he appear to look like someone who had murdered his defense teacher hours earlier? No, he just gave us a report of what he did and went about his business. You had your Potions Master reporting to you for the rest of the term about Potter's behavior and did he at any time say Potter showed some kind of remorse or regret? No! The boy showed no typical signs of post-traumatic stress, and nothing at all to make us believe him to be a killer. In fact, did not a majority of your professors say how proud they were about how he was handling himself? The boy just washed his hands of murdering his teacher and went about his life, Albus! That kind of cold-heartedness is truly terrifying from a twelve year old child!" Charles ranted.

Dumbledore gently rubbed his fingers to his temple wishing that his old Headmaster's words weren't true. "Charles, perhaps he was releasing his emotions in private or amongst his friends? We do not know for certain that he did not regret what happened to Gilderoy,"

"Regardless, Dumbledore, you must report the boy to the Board of Governors," Dilys Derwent firmly stated.

"I'm not certain that is necessar..."

"It is, Dumbledore," the unmistakable drawl of Phineas Nigellus Black stated, "a formal hearing is the only way we can truly be sure about the boy's motives."

"I can not believe I would ever be of the same opinion with the likes of you, Phineas, but I agree," Charles said.

"Harry needs to stay at Hogwarts," Dumbledore said weakly.

"You believe a hearing will see him expelled?" Armando asked with a raised eyebrow.

"No," Albus replied firmly, "but I am wary of Harry's involvement becoming public knowledge. He has been vilified enough in the media for one so young."

"If that is truly the case, your solution is quite simple," Phineas said arrogantly.

"Phineas, if you have a solution then state it," Charles demanded.

"Well, Albus, if you would think like a Slytherin instead of taking advice from Hufflepuffs," Phineas stated, sending a pointed glare at Charles, "you would know that you hold all the cards, so to speak."

"Would you stop speaking in riddles, you confounded Slytherin!" Diana Trappings shouted from her frame.

Phineas scowled at the woman before saying, "Simply demand that the meeting be held in secret and that all attending members swear an oath not to reveal anything heard at the meeting."

"I'm not certain that I would be able to get the board to agree, Phineas," Albus said slowly.

"Bah! We all know that you can easily persuade several board members, Albus, so don't pretend to be ignorant of your influence! All you need to do is make it clear that you are taking these steps to insure that the press doesn't get wind of anything that happens at the meeting. Hogwarts' standing took a bad hit this year, Albus, the board is very aware of that. They don't want the school's reputation suffering any more than it has already. Trust me, the board will not want to go advertising to the public about its failures in dealing with the Chamber of Secrets. And once you have their oaths, there is no

way they will be able to leak what they will find out about Harry Potter's role in opening the Chamber of Secrets," Phineas explained.

"I will think on it, Phineas," Dumbledore said as he warily rose from his desk and began walking towards his bed chambers, intent on getting some sleep before making some inquiries to see if Phineas's plan would work.

~Fin~

Success! The final installment, and it only took six months to finish. I do hope the wait was worth it. With almost 600,000 hits and 1700 reviews, I want to thank everyone who has read DLP. I know I didn't always respond to reviews or PMs, but I did do my best to answer as many questions as I could.

A very special thanks to EvilDime and John3776 who both took the time to do the beta work for this story. DLP wouldn't be nearly as good without you.